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TOWARDS A CULTURE OF PEACE

Letter dated 31 October 1997 from the Permanent Representative of Kyrgyzstan to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

On instructions from my Government, I have the honour to transmit the text of the message by the participants in the Issyk-Kul Forum to the world's political leaders and the international community, and also the message to the peoples and Governments of the Republic of Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, the Republic of Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and the Republic of Uzbekistan, both adopted by the participants in the Issyk-Kul Forum in Bishkek on 18 July 1997 (annexes 1 and 2).

I should be grateful if you would circulate the text of this letter and its annexes as a document of the General Assembly under agenda item 156.

(Signed) Zamira ESHMAMBETOVA
Permanent Representative of Kyrgyzstan
to the United Nations

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ANNEX I

Message from the participants in the Issyk-Kul Forum-1997 to the world's political leaders and the international community, adopted in Bishkek on 18 July 1997

1. It is 10 years since the first meeting of the participants in the Issyk-Kul Forum. In the declaration adopted then, the participants emphasized that new ideas must be disseminated in all areas of our life, including politics, thus creating new ways of thinking in each country; they also declared that the future must not depend only on decisions taken by politicians and on confrontations between individual Powers.

2. Thus the Issyk-Kul Forum, as a club of intellectuals, proved to be one of the first harbingers of the epoch-making changes that were to come. Over the past 10 years, the appearance of the world has changed beyond recognition; the cold war is a thing of the past, dozens of newly independent States have appeared on the map, and the idea of democracy has become the criterion of political values. New models of thinking and the ethics of inter-State relations are becoming firmly established.

3. However, the hopes of peoples for peace and development in the post-confrontation era have not been entirely fulfilled. The unprecedented possibilities for progress are accompanied by deep-seated turmoil. The spectre of ethnic and religious intolerance and violence hovers over the planet, and mankind is living through a dramatic phase in its history. One of the main dangers is that of conflicts at the interfaces between different cultures and civilizations.

4. Precisely for this reason we, the participants in the Issyk-Kul Forum - writers and politicians, artists and scientists - felt it necessary to meet again in 1997 in order to analyse together the new paradigm of history and spiritual evolution. As the topic of our meeting, we selected "Global and national aspects of culture in the twenty-first century".

The main challenges of the modern world are associated with the clash between two trends, globalization and fragmentation of world development. The first trend, which is creating a global information culture as one of the main features of the emerging universal civilization, at the same time poses threats to the existence of cultural diversity. The second, like an explosion, is stimulating the active growth of national self-awareness which brings with it the danger of national isolation and alienation.

5. We see the strengthening of a culture of peace and tolerance, forming a bridge to the triumph of democratic principles in relations between individuals, ethnic groups, religions and States as a way of preventing conflicts, as striking a balance between these two trends.

6. We are unanimously of the view that mankind's cultural diversity is an essential prerequisite for the maintenance of alternative paths to the further development of mankind.

We assert that interaction between different civilizations and cultures, each of which is undoubtedly the repository of the collective experience of part of mankind accumulated over centuries, and possesses its own potential for the improvement of mankind as a whole, is both possible and beneficial.

We warn mankind against the danger of a levelling down of cultures - a danger created by the standardization of mass culture - but we also warn peoples against ethnocentrism and the artificial proliferation of ethnic groups and their cultures.

We call on peoples not to call in question the values of freedom and democracy and their ability to bring peace about by releasing the potential of all human societies in existence on the planet, and we call on peoples to guard against authoritarianism and the "iron fist" philosophy.

7. In that they possess vast powers and resources - economic, social, cultural and informational and human - it is in the first place Governments that are capable of resisting the degeneration and increasing savagery of social life and national self-awareness. On the threshold of a new century, the highest priority must be attached to this task.

We call on the world's political leaders:

To use the opportunities available to them not to divide up spheres of influence, but to devise a new world order in which, on the basis of equality of rights and mutual respect, account would be taken of the interests of all peoples;

To assign to the culture of peace the priority place which was previously assigned to the culture of war; the threat to security has its roots not "abroad", but within our societies;

To develop a policy and economy of culture which would open up possibilities of maintaining its distinctiveness, together of that with other cultures, within and outside our countries;

To recognize to the full the existing dangers and challenges arising from the insufficient attention being paid to preventing the causes of ethno-religious and social conflicts and their impact on the development of national cultures;

To pay closer attention to the intellectual, scientific, and artistic communities when drawing up policies, especially in cases where specialized knowledge can have an impact on political disputes;

To react sensitively to the continuous transformation of national cultures under the impact of the mass culture of the information age;

To bear in mind that pride in the national language and national culture must never be transformed into rejection of the language and culture of others;

To make education, from the outset and on a life-long basis, the study of non-exclusionary "co-existence" with other cultures, other linguistic and ethnic communities or other religious communities.

8. We call on artists and scientists to proclaim a moratorium on the use of the historical memory of peoples to incite vengefulness and efforts to correct the mistakes of history by force.

9. We call on those who serve God to use their influence to maintain man's sacred need for faith, and to prevent religions from being transformed into a religious factor in politics or being used for ignoble purposes.

10. We call on all those who have their countries' interests at heart to show tolerance towards their neighbours, near and far, for today we are all neighbours on this planet, and we do not and never will have another one like it.

11. The international community needs to pay increased attention to Central Asia, which has a unique historical opportunity in the emerging world order of the twenty-first century, and at the same time is a special instance of the worldwide trends that are making themselves apparent in the former Yugoslavia, Afghanistan, the Middle East, the Transcaucasus, Africa and other regions of the world. By studying these trends, lessons can be drawn for the international community as a whole.

12. We welcome the efforts being made both in Kyrgyzstan and in the other central Asian countries to understand the challenges they face, seek appropriate answers and consolidate the actions of States and civil society to this end. In this context, the establishment in Bishkek of the Institute for the Culture of Peace and the sustainable development of C
entral Asia with the support of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) will be important steps.

13. The meaning of civilization is multiculturalism. This is the only acceptable and realistic idea of the present and the future. The cultures of small peoples are equal and irreproducible in their unique distinctiveness and the multiplicity of their hues.

Since they feel that they belong to a specific culture, people do not always recognize that its underlying semantic values take on linguistic form and, in their highest manifestation, are embodied in books.

Books and enlightenment are inseparably related to one another. By drawing on the powerful information forces of the modern world, they are capable of extinguishing conflicts and generating progress.

We believe that it would be appropriate to proclaim a Day of Books as a national holiday of sovereign States. Kyrgyzstan could become the initiator of such a move and a symbol of a fact that on the threshold of the twenty-first century, an Age of Enlightenment is beginning in Central Asia.

And from Central Asia the Age of Enlightenment can spread to the entire planet and give impetus to a movement for the intellectual rapprochement of civilizations in the twenty-first century. This modest but real step will create a spiritual barrier in the path of the forces proclaiming the idea of a conflict of civilizations.

14. Our hopes are not utopian. We believe in the creative powers of reason. It is important to unite the efforts of peoples and States, not to let slip the historic opportunity and to make the right choice.

ANNEX II

Message to the peoples and Governments of the Republic of Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, the Republic of Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and the Republic of Uzbekistan, adopted in Bishkek on 18 July 1997 by the participants in the Issyk-Kul Forum

From ancient times, Central Asia has been regarded as one of the cradles of human civilization. Unique natural and geopolitical factors have predetermined the close historical and ethnic, geographical, cultural and linguistic community among the peoples inhabiting the States of the region.

Central Asia has always been at the junction of various centres of power and civilizations, and has experienced the consequences of all kinds of conflicts and wars. But despite everything, the peoples have been able to preserve and multiply examples of the highest culture. Openness and patience are inherent in their mentality.

The reform years of the post-Soviet period have brought many new trials. The strength of the tradition of good relations and good neighbourliness has been put to the test many times. And yet wisdom and a balanced viewpoint have always won out over the passions of the moment.

We are sure that the weakening and elimination of the impulses of inter-ethnic and interreligious tension will facilitate multilateral work to strengthen an atmosphere of mutual understanding, harmony and tolerance. We welcome the efforts of the central Asian countries to coordinate the natural process of consolidation of ethnic groups and development of national statehood with the establishment of a reliable mechanism for safeguarding human rights. The development of bilateral inter-State relations on the basis of the norms of international law has become a guarantee of the successful conduct of this policy. A step towards multilateral cooperation was the establishment of the Inter-State Council of the Republic of Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic and the Republic of Uzbekistan. The policy of civilized economic and socio-cultural regionalism reflects the worldwide trend to integration of countries in various regions of the world in order to survive and to reaffirmation of the culture of peace.

In the difficult process of transition to a market economy, the countries of the region are encountering numerous problems and risk factors. We are concerned by the heightening of competition among various interest groups for redistribution of vital resources and for economic, political and spiritual domination. As an ideological cover for their true intentions, they frequently use various kinds of mystical ideas about the meaning of national cultures, predestination of religions and interaction of civilizations.

Trends of this kind can create complex socio-psychological stratifications and involuntarily give rise to tension instead of inducing States and peoples to cooperate, by creating conditions under which they can slide down from the peaks

of rising national self-awareness into the abyss of national exclusiveness and the temptation to assert their own supremacy and dominate others.

We support the State policy of the countries of the region aimed at maintaining civil peace and inter-ethnic harmony and establishing a legislative and legal base and social climate that promote the peaceful coexistence of various cultures and ideologies and facilitate openness between various social communities, ethnic groups and faiths. A policy of this kind must be based on the principle of rooting the socio-economic, political and cultural structures of society in the native soil. Social reforms can be successful only if they take into account the national cultural identity and distinctiveness of peoples. This necessitates flexible adaptation of the values of modern technological civilization to the specific historical circumstances of the countries of the region.

We express the hope that society and the political leadership in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan will react sensitively to the emerging problems and find appropriate ways of solving them.

A firm orientation towards these vital components of the culture of peace and tolerance will enable the countries of Central Asia to exist as civilized States, take their due place in the international arena and make their contribution to the global context of efforts to create the civilization of the coming century.

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TRAINING AND RESEARCH: UNITED NATIONS INSTITUTE FOR TRAINING AND RESEARCH

JOINT INSPECTION UNIT

Note by the Secretary-General

The Secretary-General has the honour to transmit to the members of the General Assembly the report of the Joint Inspection Unit entitled "Training institutions in the United Nations system: programmes and activities" (JIU/REP/97/6).

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Annex

TRAINING INSTITUTIONS IN THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM: PROGRAMMES AND ACTIVITIES

Prepared by

Joint Inspection Unit

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ACRONYMS

ACC	Administrative Committee on Coordination
CCAQ	Consultative Committee on Administrative Questions
CCPOQ	Consultative Committee on Programme and Operational Questions
CCSQ/OPS	Consultative Committee on Substantive Questions (Operational Activities)
ECA	Economic Commission for Africa
ECE	Economic Commission for Europe
EDI/IBRD	Economic Development Institute of the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (World Bank)
EDP	Electronic data processing
ESCAP	Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
ESCWA	Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organizatic of the United Nations
IAEA	International Atomic Energy Agency
IBRD	International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (World Bank)
ICAO	International Civil Aviation Organization
ICC	International Computing Centre
ICSC	International Civil Service Commission
IDEP	African Institute for Economic Development and Planning
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
ILO	International Labour Organization
IMO	International Maritime Organization
INSTRAW	International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement o Women
ISCC	Information Systems Coordination Committee
ITC/ILO	International Training Centre of ILO
ITU	International Telecommunication Union
JCGP	Joint Consultative Group on Policy

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JIU	Joint Inspection Unit
LAN	Local area network
UNCHS	United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat)
UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
UNCTAD/ITC	International Trade Centre/United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNHCR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNICRI	United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute
UNIDO	United Nations Industrial Development Organization
UNIFEM	United Nations Development Fund for Women
UNITAR	United Nations Institute for Training and Research
UNRWA	United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East
UNSC	United Nations Staff College
UNSCP	United Nations Staff College Project
UNU	United Nations University
UNU/WIDER	UNU World Institute for Development Economics Research
UPU	Universal Postal Union
WFP	World Food Programme
WHO	World Health Organization
WIPO	World Intellectual Property Organization
WMO	World Meteorological Organization

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: OBJECTIVE, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Objective

To take stock of the United Nations system training institutions and, having analysed their mandates and related aspects, to propose, whenever possible, concrete and practical measures, including networking, designed to coordinate their activities.

Conclusions

The initiative for the preparation of the report has come from the United Nations General Assembly. The Inspectors believe that no occasion could be more propitious for an in-depth analysis of the subject than the present one. A new, more meaningful role for the training institutions can and should be devised within the framework of the reform of the United Nations system as a whole.

During their analysis of the subject, the Inspectors have found several problems that hinder the effective functioning of the United Nations training institutions:

(a) A widespread absence of coherent training strategies, policies, guidelines and standards, both for many single organizations and for the system as a whole, formulated in direct response to the well-defined needs of beneficiary target groups and in full consultation with them;

(b) The lack of transparency and visibility of the activities of training institutions, owing partly to their reporting to different legislative organs where their activities are discussed and acted upon in isolation from one another;

(c) The proliferation of training institutions, programmes and activities and the consequent fragmentation of their efforts;

(d) The inadequate interaction, or even total lack of coordination, among training institutions;

(e) The absence of clear and well-defined procedures for the training institutions to report to the legislative organs of United Nations system organizations, as appropriate;

(f) The lack of a clear identification of training and research functions and of a differentiation between them and the consequent use of both terms indistinctly.

No analysis of training issues would be complete without a reference to the revolutionary changes in training methods and processes resulting from the introduction of modern information technology. To respond to the ever-increasing demands of the international community, United Nations system organizations must adjust to technological change and derive full advantage from it. For their part, United Nations system staff must embrace a culture of

"continuous learning", so as to retain their professional skills, broaden their knowledge and absorb technological innovations. It is in the organizations' best interests to encourage and motivate their staff to invest more time, including their own time, in building and developing work-related skills.

The importance of staff training to meet effectively and efficiently the objectives of the organizations cannot be overemphasized. The present report, however, has focused on training institutions in the United Nations system and not on the internal staff training programmes of the organizations as a key component of human resources management or the training delivered by the organizations to their constituents as part of their technical cooperation programmes. In view of the scope and complexity of the questions involved, the Inspectors believe that far more collective review and discussion of overall training issues, particularly as regards the internal staff training programmes of the organizations, might be necessary.

Recommendations

The Inspectors, having analysed the relevant information made available to them by United Nations system organizations and training institutions and the problems identified during the preparation of the present report, put forward the following recommendations:

Recommendation 1

An effective and flexible division of labour should be established among the main United Nations system training and research institutions: the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR), United Nations University (UNU) and - once its present legal status is modified from its condition as a project - United Nations Staff College (UNSC). This division of labour along general lines should be complemented by continuing full access to all training activities by all beneficiary and target groups of the training institutions. To this end:

(a) The General Assembly should entrust UNITAR primarily with clearing-house functions as regards the needs of personnel from Member States for general or non-specialized training and, upon request from the specialized agencies and in consultation with them, specialized training. Specialized agencies, organizations and institutions will retain primary responsibility for specialized training in their respective areas. In its clearing-house capacity, UNITAR would receive requests for training from Member States and secure the expertise and financial resources needed to carry out training programmes. In addition, the role of UNITAR should be expanded to cover the training needs of Member States throughout the United Nations system. The legislative organs of United Nations system organizations should take the necessary action to achieve these objectives and subsequently work out the appropriate modalities together with UNITAR;

(b) Similarly, UNSC should primarily perform clearing-house functions as regards the needs of United Nations system staff members for general or non-specialized training in core areas. Specialized agencies and institutions will retain primary responsibility for specialized training in their respective

areas. Upon the completion of the United Nations Staff College Project's five years of existence, the United Nations Secretary-General should submit to the General Assembly his proposals concerning UNSC, including, as appropriate, its reinforcement in the light of the high priority attached to staff training and the definition of its legal status;

(c) The General Assembly may wish to request UNU to conduct research, including research into common training policies, standards, methodologies and guidelines, which could be used by all United Nations system training institutions, thus stimulating cooperation and coordination among them.

Recommendation 2

Training programmes and activities can best be strengthened through cooperation primarily among the main United Nations training and research institutions: UNITAR, UNU and - once its present legal status is modified further from its condition as a project - UNSC. To that end, the General Assembly and the legislative organs of the other JIU participating organizations should encourage a strengthening of the present informal cooperation and coordination arrangements among training institutions through the establishment of a more structured mechanism. Specifically, the General Assembly and the other legislative organs should establish a coordinating consultative mechanism composed of UNITAR, UNU and UNSC acting jointly and duly networked. This mechanism would develop modalities for regular meetings to consider training and training-related research issues in the United Nations system. It could also elaborate, in consultation with other training institutions, the International Civil Service Commission (ICSC) and the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) machinery, a common conceptual training framework and strategy. Taking fully into account the UNU training research output referred to in recommendation 1 (c) above, and in consultation with other training institutions as appropriate, the mechanism would also set forth objectives, establish priorities and develop policies, guidelines and standards for the consideration and approval of the governing bodies of the training institutions. A database to be developed by the ACC machinery would furnish a sound basis for the mechanism to establish training priorities.

Recommendation 3

The General Assembly should ask ACC to submit to the respective legislative organs of JIU participating organizations an evaluation report on the use and impact of the activities of the training institutions under their jurisdiction.

Recommendation 4

The General Assembly and the legislative organs of the other JIU participating organizations should decide to consider all major training issues under a single item of their respective agendas with a view to enhancing the transparency and visibility of the activities of the training institutions and, at the same time, stimulating cooperation and coordination among the training institutions in the planning and execution of their activities.

I. INTRODUCTION

1. By resolution 51/188 of 16 December 1996, the General Assembly requested the Joint Inspection Unit, in close cooperation with UNITAR and relevant United Nations bodies, to prepare a study on the training institution programmes and activities of the United Nations system, and to submit a report thereon for consideration by the General Assembly at its fifty-second session. The Assembly adopted the resolution after considering the report of the Secretary-General (A/51/554), the report of the then Acting Executive Director of UNITAR[1] and the JIU report entitled "Feasibility study on the relocation of UNITAR to the Turin Centre" (A/51/642 and Add.1).

2. As the United Nations system embarks upon an ambitious process of reform, its organizations increasingly recognize training as a high priority. The General Assembly has requested that training activities should be accorded a larger and more visible role in support of the management of international affairs and in the execution of the economic and social development programmes of the United Nations system (resolution 51/188). For his part, the Secretary-General has emphasized that training represents a valuable investment in the future of the Organization. His statement applies equally to programmes geared to the training requirements of Member States and of United Nations system staff, whose ultimate objective is to respond to the needs of Member States by enhancing the capacity of the system organizations to react effectively to the evolving priorities of their membership.

3. In the light of the growing role of training, efficient and effective planning and execution of training activities is of critical importance. Paramount in this respect are relevance and consistency, relative need and cost-effectiveness. To ensure that the training programmes carried out by United Nations system institutions are relevant and consistent and respond to real needs, they should be more visible and transparent so as to facilitate scrutiny.

4. In its feasibility study on the possible relocation of UNITAR, JIU noted the existence of a general consensus on the need to find concrete and implementable ways to coordinate the United Nations system training activities in order to use resources more rationally, avoid duplication and overlap, and consolidate activities to the extent possible (A/51/642, para. 64). JIU also observed an apparent general agreement to tackle this question in a comprehensive manner and not to follow a piecemeal approach (ibid.).

5. Chapter II of the present report discusses training trends, developments and issues before the United Nations system organizations. Chapter III deals with general patterns, such as categories of United Nations system training institutions and their use by the organizations, their cooperation and evaluation of activities. Chapter IV describes the mandates, programmes, financing and staffing of the five training institutions that, because of their functions, budgets and prestige, may be considered as the most significant within the United Nations system: UNITAR, International Training Centre (ITC) of the International Labour Organization (ILO), UNSCP, UNU and International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW).

Finally, chapter V reviews inter-agency cooperation and coordination of training activities and the mechanisms responsible for it.

6. In the course of the preparation of the present report, the Inspectors have encountered some obstacles. Because of the report's system-wide nature, it was necessary to process voluminous documentation and to seek the views of both the participating organizations and the training institutions throughout the system, and to do this within a very tight time-frame. In certain cases, the difficulties experienced were exacerbated because the information furnished to the Inspectors was incomplete. The Inspectors were also hindered in their task by the lack of transparent and comparable system-wide data. As a result, narrative sections have taken the place that could have more advantageously been filled by system-wide comparative tables. In the Inspectors' view, such information - as well as information on the efficiency and effectiveness of the training institutions - is indispensable to ensure that the United Nations receives the full benefit of their work.

7. Furthermore, the interviews conducted by the Inspectors with senior training officials revealed that there was in the United Nations system neither a common definition nor a common understanding of training. The Inspectors also ascertained that there was no common perception of what is meant by "training institutions", and, accordingly, no list of such institutions. Consequently, the Inspectors thought it essential to suggest definitions of both training and training institutions to the system organizations (see paras. 20 and 22 below) and to elaborate a comprehensive list of training institutions (see annex*).

II. TRAINING IN THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM ORGANIZATIONS

A. Importance of training

8. In these times, characterized by dramatic organizational changes, the United Nations system organizations must invest in training with the objective of enhancing their staff's ability to cope with new legislative mandates and preparing them to adapt to change and to assume new tasks. Staff who fail to acquire the necessary knowledge and skills may contribute to a regrettable situation both for themselves, who become unable to assume their proper share of the organizations' work, and for the organizations, whose ability to operate in an effective manner is adversely affected.

9. The organizations increasingly recognize training as an essential activity and a top-priority component of human resources management and encourage their staff to undergo regular training. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) has stressed in recent years the importance of staff training for supporting changes in organizational direction and improving programme quality as well as a means of increasing productivity at a time of reductions in overall budgets. In this context, FAO has conducted a comprehensive staff training needs study that has set in place not only overall

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* To be issued at a later date.

training priorities and policies but also a planning process and an ongoing mechanism for keeping current with changing needs.

10. Despite serious financial problems, several organizations have maintained and even increased the resources devoted to training. FAO, for example, has commenced a gradual process of increasing the funding available to support staff training. From 0.66 per cent of staff costs, it will increase to 1.0 per cent of staff costs in 1998-1999, with further increases planned for later bienniums. During 1996-1997, FAO has budgeted for training US$ 2.6 million as 0.66 per cent of divisional budgets and $1.8 million for central staff development activities. The total staff development funding of FAO for this period is therefore $4.4 million. The United Nations will increase training funds from 0.6 per cent of staff costs to 0.75 per cent in 1998-1999 and even further over the next two bienniums to bring them closer to public sector standards (1.5-2.0 per cent). ILO has the highest rate of investment in staff development and training, corresponding to 1.1 per cent of its payroll.

11. There is also a trend towards decentralizing training from not only an administrative viewpoint but also a financial one. Central funds are thus becoming only one source of funding for training. An integral part of the FAO training strategy is to give line managers greater responsibility for decisions concerning the training needs of their staff by including training needs as part of each divisional budget. Many of the central training services are then delivered to divisions on a fee-per-service basis. The United Nations allocates funds for the upgrading of substantive skills to each department and office to administer in a decentralized manner, on the assumption that individual departments and offices know best the substantive needs of their staff.

B. Changing needs and contents of training

12. The examination of the organizations' training programmes reveals the following trends: heightened efforts to increase the proportion of resources devoted to management training; a shift towards more competency-based approaches; more holistic approaches to management development; an emphasis on individual responsibility for learning; mandatory participation in certain programmes; and the integration of gender and other policy issues into the programmes.[2]

13. A feature common to all United Nations system organizations is the change that is taking place in the mix of administrative and technical work. There is a growing tendency to lay more emphasis on job-related training. To cope with their training needs, the organizations concentrate on the following training and staff development areas: (a) orientation and induction; (b) programme-related training; (c) operations-related training, including overall management and leadership development, team building and work process management training, supply, human resources management, administration, budget, finance, computer skills, language skills and other support skills; (d) external relations-related training, including information and fund-raising; (e) emergency programme and operations management, including security preparedness and management; and (f) training of staff trainers and facilitators throughout the system to strengthen the capacity to deliver quality training programmes.

14. Probably the most acute need experienced throughout the system is for management skills. Indeed, despite the recent progress in management training observed by the Member States and by JIU in recent reports, the organizations have yet to create a layer of professional managers. The management skills needed fall into various categories: general management, people management, project management, negotiating skills, legal and financial contract management and others.

15. Technical skills come a close second. Information technology, characterized by growing complexity and rapid change, is likely to be a major factor in the future evolution of the United Nations system. It also seems that organizations have not addressed adequately the training implications of new information technologies and systems.[3] For their part, the staff of the organizations must embrace a continuous learning culture, so as to retain their professional skills, broaden their knowledge and absorb technological innovations. Staff should, in many instances, learn how to look for information.

16. Language training still accounts for a large proportion of training budgets in most organizations, but its conception, financing and delivery are under increasingly closer scrutiny. While ensuring the same level of delivery, FAO, for example, has changed funding arrangements for language training. It now charges divisions for language training on a fee-per-service basis. Managers now consider more carefully the priority and value of the training requested. The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) has outsourced its language training services. Because of the financial crisis of the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), its language training programme is under review.[4]

17. As the importance of United Nations peacekeeping operations grows, so grows the demand for the specialized skills necessary to tackle the diverse requirements of those operations. The United Nations, in particular, conducts a series of training courses designed to acquaint personnel selected for service with peacekeeping missions with different aspects of the duties they may be called to perform. Such courses may range from general information on living conditions in a particular mission area to very specific administrative and financial functions to be performed in the field.

C. From the "training" to the "learning" concept

18. As mentioned in paragraph 7 above, there are not at present commonly agreed definitions of training and training institutions. Yet a definition of training is indispensable for formulating strategies and plans. Such a definition would facilitate (a) clarifying which activities are to be considered as training and what objectives and results are expected from those activities; (b) establishing responsibility for training, that is to say, determining which activities should be organized and monitored centrally, which at the departmental level and which by individuals; (c) defining responsibility for training, that is to say, determining which activities should be financed by central training funds, which by departments and which by individuals or by a combination of the above; and

(d) defining responsibility for setting priorities and formulating appropriate roles.

19. Regrettably, it would appear that in many instances staff and management alike use a narrow definition of training. Typically, training is defined as a formal programme, such as a course, which imparts a specific skill. A broader definition would be beneficial to all concerned and more in tune with the human resources development requirements of the United Nations system as a whole. This definition should encompass a variety of means of acquiring skills or updating knowledge, such as on-the-job training, distance learning and self-development, and would enable managers and staff to utilize current work programmes as training opportunities. Equally important, such a definition would enhance not only staff skills but also staff morale.

20. The Inspectors felt that a definition of training was needed to establish a common language for the system organizations and training institutions and to identify what they mean by training. Accordingly, they proposed to the organizations the following definition appearing in a popular personnel management handbook which describes training as "the systematic development of the knowledge, skills, and attitudes required by an individual to perform adequately a given task or job".[5]

21. From the replies received from the system organizations it appears that this definition of training is generally acceptable. While concurring with the definition, the United Nations nonetheless noted that it was moving away from the term "training" and placing more emphasis on the terms "development" and "learning", in an effort to promote learning as a continuous process, much of which takes place outside the context of formal training. "Learning" is broader than "training", since it implies a "two-way process" combining training and participation of beneficiaries, the use of best practices and self-preparation. FAO emphasized that the training requirements of the organizations, as well as those of the individual, need to be recognized. The Inspectors accordingly propose that training in the United Nations system should be defined as "the systematic development of the knowledge, skills, and attitudes required by an individual to perform adequately a given task or job and by an organization to deliver its programmes and achieve its objectives".

22. Likewise, the Inspectors put forward the following definition of a training institution: "A training institution of the United Nations system is a structurally and identifiably distinct, and separately budgeted entity, established by any United Nations system legislative organ for the promotion of training of staff and/or representatives of the Member States and/or other partners". The United Nations system organizations and training institutions have generally agreed with this definition. In the Inspectors' view, it should now be possible, through the use of this definition, to distinguish official United Nations system training institutions from those that, though they may bear the name of United Nations system organizations or be informally connected with them, are not formally part of the system. This would in turn facilitate the compilation and maintenance of a comprehensive system-wide list of

institutions (see annex*). More information on the categories of training institutions and their classification is given in paragraphs 39 to 46 below.

D. Coping with training needs

23. Perhaps the most serious problem hindering training activities is the absence of coherent training strategies, policies, guidelines and standards observed in respect of both many single organizations and the system as a whole. Training programmes are not often enough designed, as they certainly should be, in direct response to the well-defined needs of beneficiary target groups and in full consultation with them.

24. To some extent, problems in the training area may be ascribed to the lack of a methodical approach to the entire conceptualized training process. In some instances, training institutions appear to follow a desultory and haphazard procedure to the detriment of their activities. It seems evident that, as a first step, training institutions should ascertain the training needs of their beneficiary or target groups for a given period and then assess those needs against their overall mandate, clearly visualizing them in terms of all the factors that must intervene for such needs to be efficaciously met. Steps that must logically follow are the systematic planning of training activities and the consideration of their financing - bearing in mind, in particular, the long-term unreliability of the voluntary contributions on which many institutions largely depend and their consequent financial vulnerability. Specific training projects should continue to be self-financed. Organizations should, whenever possible, increase the allocation of core funds for core training functions. And training institutions should approach fund-raising more proactively.

25. The execution of training programmes should be supported by a monitoring mechanism and succeeded by evaluation arrangements designed to gauge the impact of specific training activities on the target group and to generate the feedback necessary to adjust and fine-tune the training output. The whole process should be capped by a follow-up feature to ensure that the experience acquired is utilized to full effect.

26. At present, United Nations system organizations use several training modalities: (a) internally, that is, using in-house expertise and resources; (b) externally, that is, using expertise external to the United Nations system; (c) jointly with other system organizations; and (d) through United Nations system training institutions.

27. Most training provided by the organizations is internal. It usually covers subjects of a general nature, such as general management principles or job-related basic information technology, and permits making economies of scale.

28. On the other hand, training aimed at developing very specialized skills in areas not covered by training institutions' programmes such as, for instance, drug abuse control, benefits greatly from the availability of in-house

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* To be issued at a later date.

expertise. By conducting their own programmes, the organizations can tailor them to their specific needs and keep their staff abreast of current developments affecting their policies, programming and procedures.

29. External training is normally organized through individual agreements and partnerships with Governments, non-governmental organizations and universities and local and regional training institutions. For example, three Institutes have been established under the auspices of the International Maritime Organization (IMO). Together with those institutes, IMO provides technical and financial assistance for establishing many of the existing maritime training institutes in the developing countries. One of its main objectives is to develop and support such institutes. The Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) and the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) cooperate with Governments and international organizations active in their respective regions as well as with the business community. UNCHS makes use of the Economic Development Institute of the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EDI/IBRD) training programmes. The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), FAO, the International Telecommunications Union (ITU) and the World Health Organization (WHO) have extensive recourse to consulting firms, individual consultants and local universities.

30. United Nations system organizations apparently use jointly only a few training programmes and activities. The most widespread are language training and training in other generic subjects, such as administration, management and communication skills. Those training programmes are normally organized by the United Nations or some specialized agencies, such as the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) or WHO, and offered to other organizations on a cost-sharing basis.

E. New information technology and training

31. For many years, training was bound to a classroom approach where both the trainer and the trainees must be present. That traditional notion of learning now coexists with many other approaches. It has long been realized that it is in many instances cheaper to bring the trainer to the trainees than the trainees to the trainer. As technology advances, basic training premises must evolve even further to embrace new, bold options. Training devices that can bring learning to the trainees over a long distance and that may dispense with the presence of the trainers and even permit the recording and repetition of their teaching as often as desired, for the benefit of the same or of many target groups simultaneously, are causing a new revolution in training.

32. Computer-based training packages and videoconferencing have become common throughout the United Nations system. Expanded utilization of the Internet and interactive networking, using the Internet and the World Wide Web, have significant training implications, including the introduction of distance learning. This new technology is very important for the United Nations system, which "must not limit itself to the knowledge and expertise available within its own family but must reach out and tap the knowledge, analyses and expertise of the world's leading institutions in each of its fields of activity" (A/51/950, para. 263).

33. Multimedia are becoming a main training feature in the United Nations system. Recent advances in video packages, electronic mail and computer systems have improved efficiency in the delivery and use of training programmes and slashed training costs. Electronic mail has facilitated the organization of training programmes. Videos, CD-ROMs and other multimedia packages produced by system organizations are available for language and substantive training to both Member States officials and staff.

34. On-line training is rapidly gaining ground in the United Nations system. Electronic data processing (EDP) self-study materials are now available over the local area network (LAN) in many organizations. Some of them use the Internet and Intranet extensively. World Wide Web search engines to locate information across the United Nations system web sites are under development. In many instances, staff should be trained to look for information.

35. United Nations system training institutions should be encouraged to take full advantage of these revolutionary training methods in responding to the needs of Member States, staff and the international community as a whole. At the same time, it must be borne in mind that technology advances so fast that it is hardly possible to keep abreast of it all. Technology should therefore be introduced with the necessary scientific and financial flexibility, lest commitments are made to systems that may become obsolete before they can yield an adequate return on the investments made on them. Since state-of-the-art technology may consume large proportions of scarce resources, training institutions must strike a balance between the immediate benefits offered by technology and the long-term interests of their target groups.

III. GENERAL PATTERNS AND USE OF TRAINING INSTITUTIONS BY THE SYSTEM ORGANIZATIONS

A. Patterns

36. Over the years, the United Nations system has created or has contributed to create a diverse and largely unrelated mix of training institutions scattered round the world, often because training needs were met on an ad hoc basis through the development of a specific programme or the outsourcing of training services. The efficiency of this myriad of institutions is adversely affected by their lack of visibility, due partly to their reporting to different United Nations system bodies where their activities are discussed and acted upon in isolation from one another. For example, three main United Nations training and research institutions, namely, UNITAR, UNU and INSTRAW, report under different agenda items to the Second and Third Committees of the General Assembly. A fourth institution, UNSCP, which is a United Nations Secretariat venture and not a subsidiary body of the General Assembly, has been entrusted to ITC/ILO for implementation and administration. As such, UNSCP is part of the training operations of ITC/ILO and reports regularly - and is accountable for its activities - to the ITC/ILO Board and, through it, to the ILO Governing Body.

37. Perhaps because of the proliferation of training institutions and the consequent fragmentation of their efforts, it seems virtually impossible to determine with any certainty how many training and research institutions exist

within the system, what they do, what is their official status or how they are financed and staffed. Little or no information is available on their official status or on whether they are under the jurisdiction of legislative bodies or are autonomous or semi-autonomous. In many instances, nothing much is known about their financing either.

38. Nor is there an official definition of "training institution" or a comprehensive list of United Nations system training institutions. Views on the subject vary. For the Office of Legal Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat, for example, an appropriate manner of defining a "training institution" would be to examine its functions and responsibilities. As shown in section B, Categories of training institutions, this is not always easy. As a first step, the Inspectors have suggested the definition given in paragraph 22 above and have compiled the list of training institutions contained in the annex to the present report.*

B. Categories of training institutions

39. The United Nations training institutions differ considerably from one another in terms of their mandates, funding modalities, governing structures and reporting procedures. In the absence of an official definition of training institutions, it has sometimes been difficult to identify and categorize them. On the whole, training and research functions have not been clearly identified or differentiated and the terms tend to be used indistinctly. Certainly, there are institutions that use the word "training" as part of their name; but they are not the only ones that can be considered as training institutions in a broad sense. Indeed, several research institutes have a training component. At the same time, some institutions that are not explicitly designated as training institutions nevertheless fall into that category.

40. Quite apart from the best known ones, such as UNITAR, UNSCP, ITC/ILO and INSTRAW, there are a plethora of United Nations system training institutions throughout the world (see annex*). Their total number, including those set up within the framework of capacity-building, is close to 80.

41. The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), for example, has established three subsidiary regional institutions: the Asian and Pacific Centre for Transfer of Technology (APCTT) at New Delhi; the Regional Coordination Centre for Research and Development of Coarse Grains, Pulses, Roots and Tuber Crops in the Humid Tropics of Asia and the Pacific (CGPRT Centre) at Bogor, Indonesia; and the Statistical Institute for Asia and the Pacific (SIAP) at Tokyo. Another example is the 15 regional and subregional training institutions set up by ECA. For seven of them, training is the main activity. Among them is the African Institute for Economic Development and Planning (IDEP), a subsidiary body of ECA. As part of its overall mission to provide services to Palestine refugees, including educational services, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA)

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* To be issued at a later date.

operates eight vocational and technical training centres within its area of operations.

42. United Nations system organizations sponsor many training institutions, quite a few of which bear the organizations' names. By way of example, three institutions have been established under IMO auspices to train representatives of Member States. They are the IMO International Maritime Law Institute (IMO/IMLI), located at Msida, Malta; the IMO World Maritime University (IMO/WMU), located at Malmo, Sweden; and the IMO International Maritime Academy (IMO/IMAT), located at Trieste, Italy. But, although they bear IMO's name, they are not part of IMO. Similar is the case of the more than 120 International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) civil aviation training centres established with the assistance of the technical cooperation programme.

43. Even though they have not established training institutions officially, some specialized agencies have created or helped to create other structures within the framework of capacity-building. Thus, the Universal Postal Union (UPU), in collaboration with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), has developed regional postal training schools in Africa and Asia (e.g. the Asian Pacific Postal Training Centre (APPTC) in Bangkok, and the Ecole multinationale supérieure des postes (EMSP) in Abidjan. In accordance with the criteria established at the thirty-fourth session of its Executive Committee, the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) recognizes regional meterological training centres operated and financed by Member States.

44. The United Nations system training institutions can be classified as follows: (a) institutions established by the legislative bodies of United Nations system organizations as entities thereof; (b) institutions established by the legislative bodies of United Nations system organizations but not as entities thereof; (c) institutions established within the framework of institution-building; (d) institutions that have a training component but not as their main mandate; and (e) institutions that use the name of a United Nations system organization although they actually have no official status.

45. Another criterion to categorize training institutions may be their coverage or scope. There are thus training institutions that provide specialized training meeting the needs of a single organization, while others provide training geared to the needs of several organizations or even of the United Nations system as a whole. Still another criterion is that of the issues covered by an institution, which may be relevant to a single organization, several organizations or the system as a whole.

46. The Inspectors have examined whether the beneficiaries of training institutions could furnish yet another criterion to categorize them. But this criterion is not easy to use, because most institutions have a mixed audience. UNSCP, for example, is mainly concerned with staff training, but has other target audiences besides staff, including personnel from Member States and non-governmental organizations. The situation is much clearer in respect of some training institutions - such as those listed in paragraph 43 above - that train personnel from Member States within the framework of capacity-building.

C. Use of the major institutions by the system organizations

47. ECA, ICAO and UPU reported that they do not use any United Nations system training institution. So did the International Trade Centre of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD/ITC), although it has collaborated with ITC/ILO on training trainers and with INSTRAW on the development of women in trade. ITU does not subscribe to any United Nations training institution, but would do so once they fit ITU needs. For ECE, training for policy makers on various issues related to transition processes is highly specialized and only in exceptional cases can the expertise of the United Nations training institutions be used in that respect.

48. ECE, ESCWA, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), UNIDO, the United Nations, the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) and the World Food Programme (WFP) use, in different degrees, ITC/ILO training programmes. ITC/ILO has cooperated in providing lectures on "teaching methods" at the WMO regional training seminars for national instructors. It has also organized, at the World Meteorological Organization's request of training courses on the management of meteorological training centres. United Nations Headquarters, ECE, UNCHS, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), UNHCR and the International Computing Centre (ICC) use UNITAR programmes. FAO, the United Nations Drug Control Programme, ICC, UNHCR, United Nations/Headquarters and UNICEF use UNSCP programmes. UNCHS, UNEP and ICC use UNU training programmes.

49. A variety of factors may be at the root of the limited use of these training institutions by the organizations. Perhaps the most important is that the institutions' programmes apparently meet only a very small percentage of the organizations' training and staff development requirements. The organizations often need specific substantive, sectoral and technological training that the training institutions do not cover or cover only partially. Among these needs are information technology, management development, telecommunications, personal effectiveness, stress and crisis management, supplies and transport, secretarial, marketing and sales, finance and accounting, and logistics.

D. Evaluation and assessment of the activities of the training institutions

50. Few organizations formally evaluate the effectiveness of the training institutions' programmes. According to the replies received by the Inspectors, only UNICEF has guidelines to evaluate staff training. ILO, UNHCR and UNICEF regularly provide formal and informal feedback on training to its staff internally and externally so that training programmes and techniques can be improved. The organizations that carry out evaluations usually confine themselves to analysing answers to questionnaires distributed among course participants.

51. As a rule, the United Nations system organizations using training programmes emphasize the need to identify those training centres that have real training skills, those that can help other organizations to organize effective training programmes. The organizations also stress that UNSCP has a good

potential for strengthening further staff capacities in management and humanitarian assistance and offering cost-effective training in areas of common concern to the organizations.

IV. MANDATES, PROGRAMMES, FINANCING AND STAFFING OF THE MAJOR UNITED NATIONS TRAINING INSTITUTIONS

A. United Nations Institute for Training and Research

52. The initiative for the launching of UNITAR in 1966 came from the General Assembly. As envisaged by the Assembly, UNITAR would be an institution to train personnel, particularly from the developing Member States, for administrative and operational assignments with the United Nations and the specialized agencies as well as for national service. UNITAR would also provide advanced training for persons already serving in such posts and would conduct research and seminars on the operations of the United Nations and the specialized agencies. The initial work programme of UNITAR was based on several broad principles. Training should not be subordinated to research. Research should relate to practical and specific objectives. Because of its guiding role, UNITAR should take a long-range view of its work.

53. UNITAR consistently held that training and research were mutually reinforcing activities in pursuing the maintenance of peace and security and the promotion of economic and social development. Yet, because of an organizational issue, training and research were carried out as separate activities with independent programmes. Except for the guidance received from the UNITAR Board of Trustees and its Executive Director, the two activities had little in common.

54. The Assembly had conceived UNITAR as an independent institution financed from voluntary contributions, both public and private. Unfortunately, voluntary contributions, which were quite generous at the beginning, thinned out in time. As a consequence, the Institute's financial basis was seriously compromised. Other difficulties experienced by UNITAR sprang from a trend towards spreading its efforts over a wide range of activities, thus fragmenting and diluting them, instead of concentrating on major issues. Eventually, UNITAR was precipitated into a crisis whose nature related both to its financing and to its mandate.

55. Until recently, UNITAR was suffering the consequences of a long and painful crisis that eroded its prestige as the first training institution in the United Nations system. Yet, even throughout this difficult phase, it remained the largest training institution in the system in terms of programmes, budget and staff. UNITAR has now successfully completed an ambitious restructuring and reorganization process. As a result, it enjoys again the full confidence of Member States and can develop and strengthen its programmes without any financial support from the United Nations regular budget.

56. The General Assembly, in its resolution 45/219 of 21 December 1990, requested the Secretary-General to appoint an independent consultant to prepare recommendations on the relevance of the Institute's mandate, its overall staffing requirements to meet the needs of the United Nations and its Member

States and the financial means for meeting those needs. Having conducted a review of all aspects of the activities of UNITAR, the consultant concluded that, while the Institute's mandate remained on the whole relevant, it had nevertheless to be redefined. In his view, training, while continuing to be the backbone of the Institute's activities, had to be focused on training for international cooperation, training of United Nations and specialized agency staff and training for peacekeeping operations (A/46/482, annex, para. 3).

57. At its fifty-first session, the General Assembly, following consideration of the report of the Secretary-General (A/51/554), the report of the Executive Director of UNITAR[1] and the JIU feasibility study (A/51/642 and Add.1) adopted resolution 51/188. The resolution reaffirmed the relevance of UNITAR and the pertinence of research activities related to training undertaken by the Institute within its mandate; requested the Secretary-General to explore in consultation with the Executive Director of the Institute, as well as with the heads of United Nations programmes and funds, ways and modalities of cooperation, in order to better define the role of the Institute in the fields of training, research and methodology, assessment and capacity-building within the United Nations system, and to report thereon to the General Assembly at its fifty-second session; and invited the Institute to strengthen its cooperation with other United Nations institutes and relevant national, regional and international institutes.

58. Its difficulties overcome, UNITAR is ready to play a leading role as the clearing house for the training of personnel from Member States within the United Nations system. UNU and, once established, the UNSCP, are in a position to play similar roles with respect to their own areas of competence and target groups. Despite their sometimes precarious financial situation, other institutions respond effectively to specific training needs. Even though these training institutions do not duplicate or overlap one another, they are not really capable of developing their full potential owing to their lack of interface and synergy. Perhaps the only effective means to ensure the smooth functioning and interfacing of all United Nations system training institutions is a mechanism to enhance their cooperation and coordination.

Financing

59. UNITAR is funded by the voluntary contributions of Member States and intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations to the General Fund and earmarked donations to Special Purpose Grants. The General Fund covers mainly training in international affairs management through courses for representatives of Member States at Permanent Missions in New York, Geneva and Vienna. Table 1 shows that, in 1996, General Fund expenditures amounted to US$ 1,124,449 (against $843,046 in 1995), representing a decrease of $22,937 vis-à-vis the appropriation approved by the Board of Trustees.

60. This decrease is due to a reduction in voluntary contributions from the Institute's major donors, which amounted to only $248,209, compared to $315,714 in 1995 and $445,864 in 1994. In the Institute's view, this can be attributed, at least in part, to the uncertainty that existed for a time regarding the Institute's location and future. It also reflects the donors' preference to contribute earmarked funds rather than purely voluntary contributions. The

situation is, however, improving, with some donors transferring their 1996 contributions in early 1997 and, also, with some States having officially decided to resume their voluntary contributions to UNITAR.

Table 1. UNITAR: General Fund direct costs and estimates, 1997

(United States dollars)

Main objects of expenditure	1996 Appropriation	1996 Actual expenditures	1997 estimates
Staff/personnel costs	648 000	760 020	577 000
Travel	30 000	29 841	30 000
Contractual services[a]	100 000	21 952	50 000
Operating expenses[b]	199 727	153 430	180 000
Equipment	20 000	12 744	10 000
Subtotal	977 727	977 987	847 000
Reserve	149 659	146 698	197 050
Grand total	1 147 386	1 124 685	1 044 050

[a] Includes audit.

[b] Includes rental of premises.

61. The opening balance for 1997 amounted to $392,989, as opposed to $550,555 as at 1 January 1996. This indicates that a decrease of the reserve is carried over. Several measures are being considered to resolve this difficulty. The Board of Trustees, for instance, will launch an in-depth fund-raising campaign. Should its results not be sufficient, other ways would be contemplated, such as cutting the number of training programmes offered free of charge or charging higher overhead from the special purpose grant programmes for the administrative services rendered by staff paid out of the General Fund.

Table 2. UNITAR: special purpose grants - costs and requirements, 1997

(United States dollars)

Main objects of expenditure	1996 Appropriation	1996 Actual expenditures	1997 Estimates	1997 Additional estimates
International affairs training	914 505	701 463	695 203	790 203
Environmental and natural resource management training	2 649 585	2 679 113	3 964 838	1 653 826
Financial management training	1 142 012	833 190	548 050	858 800
Disaster management training	131 217	122 917	53 110	
Grand total	4 837 319	4 336 683	5 261 201	3 303 280

62. Expenses from special purpose grants constitute earmarked funds for specific training programmes. Table 2 shows that, in 1996, actual expenditures amounted to $4,336,683, as against $3,756,966 in 1995. These expenditures fell short of the paid-in funds and are 12 per cent lower than the funds appropriated by the Board of Trustees. This is attributed to three factors: (a) continued strengthening of the programmes; (b) the phasing out of some minor projects; and (c) delays in the implementation of fully funded programmes. The amount of funds allocated for 1997 under special purpose grants exceeds $5 million. The programmes are all developing and expanding, thus demonstrating the credibility of the Institute's methodology in the fields selected by the Board of Trustees.

Training activities

63. The Institute's operations have now reached a critical mass: some 70 different training programmes with approximately 4,000 participants are organized every year over the five continents. During the restructuring phase, the programmes have been streamlined in fields where UNITAR enjoys comparative advantages. They have also been diversified and special emphasis has been placed on capacity-building.

64. As for the methodology, UNITAR has introduced a more participatory approach, implying that (a) the programmes have been conceived and designed together with the recipient countries, at the national and regional levels, to meet their priorities, and (b) the main responsibility for managing the programmes is left to the national authorities or regional authorities. More recently, new types of programmes have been launched with a high cost/efficiency ratio, including training of trainers and development of training packages and correspondence instruction.

65. The Institute's major training programmes cover international affairs management and economic and social development. Programmes devoted to international affairs management issues deal with topics such as multilateral diplomacy, peacemaking and preventive diplomacy, international affairs management, international organizations, international law, United Nations peacekeeping operations and environmental law.

66. Programmes devoted to economic and social development issues deal with topics such as management of economic and social development, chemicals and waste management, implementation of the London guidelines and the prior informed consent (PIC) procedure, preparation of national profiles to assess the national infrastructure for the sound management of chemicals, design and implementation of national pollutant release and transfer registers (PRTRs), implementation of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), new information technologies and modern communication means at the service of the post-Rio Conventions, desertification information systems in the context of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, legal aspects of debt, economic, and financial management, and disaster reduction management in the countries of the Sahel.

B. International Training Centre of the International Labour Organization

Mandate

67. The International Training Centre (ITC/ILO) was established at Turin, Italy, in 1963 as the training arm of ILO. It operates under the overall authority of the ILO Governing Body but has a separate Statute and Board. Its mandate is to provide training activities at the service of economic and social development, in accordance with, and through, the promotion of international labour standards. It may establish arrangements with the United Nations, specialized agencies and other international organizations to pursue activities pursuant to its objectives.

68. At its November 1995 session, the ITC/ILO Board approved a second five-year development plan up to the year 2000. The plan identifies the following objectives for ITC/ILO: (a) mobilizing and spreading, through training, the standards, experience and expertise accumulated by ILO and by the United Nations system, as well as by other development partners; (b) supporting through appropriate training actions the reform efforts undertaken within the multilateral development cooperation system; (c) renewing and developing the ITC/ILO range of training products on work rights, as well as on key areas of the United Nations development agenda, including human rights, governance and the management of development cooperation; and (d) strengthening the capacities of Governments, employers and workers in the planning and management of the development process.

Financing

69. When ITC/ILO was established, 88 per cent of its budget consisted of direct contributions and only 12 per cent of its income came from training activities. During the period covered by the first development plan, 1990-1995, ITC/ILO faced an abrupt reduction in income from ILO technical cooperation activities. The individual fellowship programme linked to UNDP-funded projects implemented by ILO decreased substantially, with a US$ 5 million reduction in 1995 compared with 1990.

70. ITC/ILO is primarily a self-financed organization. Approximately two thirds of its income is generated by training activities, including activities carried out on behalf of other organizations and direct fees from sponsored individual participants, consultancy assignments, development of training materials and others. Other funding comes from a variety of sources, including Italian local, provincial and national authorities; Governments, intergovernmental organizations and international non-governmental organizations; and gifts, grants and legacies.

71. Considerable efforts have been made to broaden and diversify the ITC/ILO funding base, mainly through the strengthening of relationships with the European Union and IBRD, as well as through the presentation of open courses to the international market and the submission of competitive bids in response to international calls for tenders. The recipient countries themselves finance a

growing and strategically significant, yet still slight, number of training activities.

72. No significant increase in direct contributions may be expected in the ever more competitive technical assistance environment in which ILO and the United Nations system operate. In the ILO Director-General's view, the ITC/ILO resource-mobilization strategy needs to be adapted accordingly. ITC/ILO must increase its volume of activities by enhancing the quality and range of its programmes and products and by expanding and diversifying its training initiatives with new partners, in accordance with its programme objectives and its research and development strategy.

Training activities

73. At present, ITC/ILO hosts other research and training entities of the United Nations system, such as UNSCP. An agreement was signed between the United Nations and ILO for the relocation of another United Nations institute, the United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute (UNICRI) to the ITC/ILO campus and the use of its facilities and services.[6]

74. While the training activities of ITC/ILO originally related mainly to ILO, over the past five years they have increasingly concerned the United Nations system as a whole. The target groups trained through ITC/ILO comprise not only United Nations system staff, but also personnel from Member States and non-governmental organizations and other individuals, some from the private sector.

75. The ITC/ILO training programme grew in 1994 and 1995 with respect to the overall number of activities and the number of participants in both individual and group training. The total number of trainees increased from 2,738 in 1993 to 2,784 in 1994 and 3,488 in 1995. Despite a tendency towards training for shorter periods, the number of participant/days also rose. During 1995, ITC/ILO offered programmes to participants from 159 countries. Approximately 75 per cent of group training took place at Turin. Training was given in the field whenever that option was more effective or less costly.

76. As indicated in the ILO Director-General's programme and budget proposals for 1998-1999,[7] ITC/ILO needs to develop its capacities in three areas: (a) development of training products based on a cooperative network of training institutions; (b) technical capacity to provide training advisory services and carry out training operations in the field and on the campus through cost-effective delivery structures; and (c) an improved communication and marketing capacity necessitated by the heavy dependence of ITC/ILO on donors. In addition, ITC/ILO will continue to expand its programme in the core mandate areas of ILO, such as training in support of reforms in social protection, labour relations and labour market institutions.

C. United Nations Staff College Project

77. At the beginning of the 1970s, it was suggested to organize training programmes of the "staff college" type to provide United Nations system staff

with the skills, knowledge and techniques necessary to respond efficiently and effectively to the requirements of the Member States. UNITAR, the Administrative Committee on Coordination and, to a certain extent, the Fifth Committee of the General Assembly supported the initiative. The idea was later dropped because of financial complications. But the need for a staff college continued to be felt.

Mandate

78. Following the positive findings of a 1995 feasibility study undertaken by the United Nations in collaboration with the ITC/ILO, the United Nations Secretary-General established UNSCP on 8 January 1996 in his capacity as Chairman of ACC. The project, to be initially implemented over a five-year period, has received the support of the executive heads of the United Nations system organizations in the context of ACC and the subsidiary body on system-wide training activities of the Consultative Committee on Administrative Questions (Financial and Budgetary Questions) (CCAQ(FB)) (A/51/554). During prior consultations, four core needs were identified: (a) to satisfy current demands that individual organizations could not meet because of limited resources; (b) to strengthen the organizations' ability to meet future challenges; (c) to engender greater cooperation and coordination; and (d) to satisfy increasing calls for reform.

79. The Secretary-General opened UNSCP officially in April 1997. Soon afterwards, JIU requested the Office of Legal Affairs to clarify the legal status of UNSCP. The Office of Legal Affairs replied that UNSCP is a United Nations project initiated by the Secretary-General and under its overall guidance. The United Nations has entrusted the implementation of UNSCP and its overall management to the ILO International Training Centre at Turin. UNSCP draws on financial resources specifically raised for this purpose and therefore does not affect the budget of the United Nations.

80. UNSCP is a system-wide training and learning venture executed by ITC/ILO on behalf of the United Nations system. It is conceived as an interconnected, system-wide network of learning programmes and opportunities, which offers the additionality of the interorganizational dimension and cooperation with the public and private sectors. The main objective of UNSCP is to design and deliver system-wide training for both United Nations staff and national partners in order to (a) strengthen management capacities and promote a more cohesive management culture; and (b) build more effective cross-programme linkages and support cross-sectoral integration in the major areas of activity of the United Nations.

81. According to the UNSCP architects, the additionality will be achieved through (a) building on shared experiences and lessons learned to strengthen coordination and collaboration among partners in endeavours that cut across traditional lines of organizational responsibility; (b) building a shared vision for the future and finding commonalities of approach and opportunities to increase effectiveness; and (c) building a shared management philosophy and approach to form a United Nations system management culture. In their view, UNSCP will not, in any way, duplicate existing training programmes, but will

rather aim to ensure better linkages and integration between sectors of activity involved in joint endeavours.

82. The declared aim of UNSCP is not only to supplement and expand training in areas of common concern but also to pool resources and share experiences as appropriate. In his July 1997 report, entitled "Renewing the United Nations: a programme for reform", the Secretary-General observed that "the United Nations Staff College will be requested, in preparing programmes for international civil servants throughout the United Nations system, to make full use of the research and capacity-building experience of the research institutes" (A/51/950, action 29 (b)). UNSCP offers an opportunity to take advantage of the system-wide capacities and facilities available at the ITC/ILO in Turin. Thus, UNSCP will also be acting as the support structure of the network.

Financing

83. UNSCP is financed from several sources, including voluntary contributions of individual Member States, contributions by United Nations and other organizations, revenues from its own activities and contributions from foundations and the civil society, as appropriate, for specific training initiatives within its mandate. The relative importance of the sources is reflected in table 3. Initial grants from the host Government and United Nations system organizations have taken the form of up-front contributions in cash, in kind, or both. These grants have been invested in a basic UNSCP infrastructure and in programme development. Private sector in-kind contributions have been used for specific programme development. Over its initial five-year, start-up, phase, UNSCP is intended to become self-sustaining, being financed largely through user service fees and income generated through training activities.

Table 3. UNSCP: sources of funding, 1996-1997

(United States dollars)

Sources of funding	1996 Income	1997 Foreseen income
United Nations programmes and funds	1 969 100	1 630 432
Specialized agencies	158 669	106 180
Governments	1 891 975	1 734 320
Non-United Nations system intergovernmental organizations	3 460	
Non-governmental organizations	92 081	10 214
Others		654 202
Grand total	4 115 285	4 135 348

Training activities

84. Currently, UNSCP work areas are as follows: (a) support of peacekeeping, peacemaking and peace-building and management of complex emergencies and post-conflict recovery, representing a combination of joint training and shared reflection on key aspects of field operations in those areas and their cross-sectoral and inter-institutional dimensions; (b) support of management development, organizational learning and change in the United Nations system; and (c) support of economic and social development, development management and development studies.

85. The ongoing training activities of UNSCP are, to a large extent, carried out in direct response to General Assembly resolutions on operational activities. Apart from putting training and substantive skills and experience to use in specific programmes and activities, UNSCP staff work on various consultancy assignments together with the UNSCP vast associated network of United Nations system organizations, experts and academic and private institutions.

D. United Nations University

86. By resolution 2951 (XXVII) of 11 December 1972, the General Assembly established UNU as an autonomous organ under the joint sponsorship of the United Nations and UNESCO. The University started its operations in Tokyo in May 1975.

Mandate

87. As defined by its Charter, UNU is a community of scholars and worldwide network of advanced study institutions devoted to research, post-graduate training and the dissemination of knowledge. Its scope comprises the study of the most pressing problems of concern to the international community. Within that framework, the University is intended to act as a bridge between the international scientific community and, in its broad sense, the world of policy-making. The four areas of concentration articulated in the University's third medium-term perspective are peace and governance; development; environment; and science and technology.

88. The UNU network of research and training centres comprises: (a) the UNU World Institute for Development Economics Research (UNU/WIDER), established in 1984 in Helsinki; (b) the UNU Institute for Natural Resources in Africa (UNU/INRA), established in 1990 in Accra, with a Mineral Resources Unit in Lusaka; (c) the UNU Institute for New Technologies (UNU/INTECH), established in 1990 in Maastricht, the Netherlands; (d) the UNU International Institute for Software Technology (UNU/IIST), established in 1992 in Macau; and (e) the UNU Institute of Advanced Studies (UNU/IAS), established in 1996 in Tokyo.

89. The functions and objectives of these research and training centres are as follows:

(a) UNU/WIDER, the University's first research and training centre, studies global economic policies to improve human life. Its main purpose is to

help developing countries formulate economic policies leading to robust, equitable and environmentally sustainable growth;

(b) UNU/INRA assists in efforts to enhance the management and rehabilitation of Africa's natural resources. Its main objectives are to strengthen national institutions in Africa, mobilize scientists and technologists throughout the continent and empower them with knowledge so they can formulate self-reliant policy options. Its activities focus on (i) soil and water conservation and management; (ii) indigenous food crops and other useful plants; and (iii) mineral resource development;

(c) UNU/INTECH conducts integrative policy-oriented research and training on the economic and social implications of new technologies for developing countries. Its programmes emphasize research on the economic and social impact of new technologies, policy studies on urgent matters and training of Ph.D. fellows;

(d) UNU/IIST helps developing countries to strengthen their capabilities and become self-reliant in three areas: (i) development of software for export and domestic use; (ii) university-level software curriculum development; and (iii) international software research. It also helps to bridge gaps between theory and practice, university and industry, consumer and producer, and industrialized countries and developing countries. In its programme activities, UNU/IIST concentrates on advanced joint research and development, and dissemination of public domain software and publications;

(e) UNU/IAS develops solutions to problems at the interface of societal and natural systems. Its research programme concerns three interlinked themes of environmentally sustainable development: eco-restructuring for sustainable development, mega-cities and urban development, and multilateralism and governance. It also has a postgraduate education programme offering Ph.D. fellowships and short training courses in these subjects.

90. The Academic Division at UNU headquarters in Tokyo also coordinates worldwide programmes and project networks on subjects ranging from democracy and human rights and the United Nations in the twenty-first century to mountain ecology and sustainable development. The University has two specialized research and training programmes. The first is the Programme for Biotechnology in Latin America and the Caribbean (UNU/BIOLAC), located in Caracas. The second is the UNU International Network on Water, Environment and Health (UNU/INWEH), located in Hamilton, Canada. In addition, the International Leadership Academy (UNU/ILA), located in Amman, serves as a focal point for the exchange of information and experience among future world leaders.

Financing

91. UNU receives no funds from the United Nations regular budget. Its activities are supported entirely by voluntary contributions from Governments, international organizations, private companies and foundations. Its basic annual income for operating expenses comes from investment income derived from its endowment fund. As at 1 October 1996, pledges to the University's endowment fund and operating and specific contributions made by 54 Governments and 109

other sources totalled US$ 318.5 million, of which US$ 291.2 million had already been received. More than US$ 120 million had been raised in the past nine years. The financial constraints have made it necessary for UNU to streamline its activities and reduce expenditures wherever possible. At its fifty-first session, the General Assembly recommended that UNU adopt sound administrative practices and find a successful fund-raising strategy.

Training activities

92. Training is an essential component of the overall academic programme of UNU. Fellowships, in particular, account for quite a large proportion of this programme. Between 1976 and 1996, more than 1,450 fellows received postgraduate training in UNU networks. Through fellowships, UNU has played a much-needed role in the capacity-building of key developing country institutions likely to have a multiplier effect on human resource development within the country or region. UNU is also developing initiatives for expanding its training activities through joint sponsorship arrangements with appropriate national, regional and international organizations.

93. In addition, UNU has initiated a concerted effort to streamline and give sharper focus and relevance to its main research, training and dissemination work. Acting on the recommendations of high-level advisory groups composed of scholars, policy-makers and United Nations officials, the University has reorganized its programme of work in conformity with Agenda 21, the programme of action adopted by the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, and An Agenda for Peace. UNU is also seeking to strengthen further its academic contributions in areas at the forefront of the United Nations and to provide useful policy inputs whenever possible.

E. International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women

Mandate

94. In conformity with General Assembly resolution 3520 (XXX) of 15 December 1975, and responding to a recommendation made by the World Conference of the International Women's Year, held at Mexico City from 19 June to 2 July 1975, on 12 May 1976, the Economic and Social Council adopted resolution 1998 (LX) establishing the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women. On 16 December 1976, the Assembly adopted resolution 31/135 endorsing the establishment of INSTRAW, thus ratifying the above-mentioned Council resolution.

95. INSTRAW is an autonomous institution within the framework of the United Nations. Its objectives, as set out in its Statute (A/39/511, annex, para. 4), are to stimulate and assist, through research, training and the collection and dissemination of information, the advancement of women and their integration in the developmental process as participants and beneficiaries. The Institute accordingly conducts research and performs training and clearing-house functions. It also establishes training programmes through which it "shall endeavour to raise awareness on issues concerning women and development and

strive to achieve equal participation of women in all aspects of economic and social development and to increase the opportunities for women to acquire new skills in order to meet the challenges of rapid change in today's society" (ibid.).

96. In its resolution 50/163 of 22 December 1995, the General Assembly reaffirmed the original mandate and distinct capacity of the Institute to carry out research and training for the advancement of women, as stipulated in its resolution 3520 (XXX). As in previous resolutions, such as resolution 48/105 of 20 December 1993, the Assembly emphasized the unique function of the Institute as the only entity within the United Nations system devoted exclusively to research and training for the integration of women in development. The mandate of INSTRAW on the advancement of women was also recognized in the Beijing Platform for Action. Beginning with the Assembly's fifty-second session, and in compliance with resolution 50/163, INSTRAW, while continuing to report to the Third Committee, will start reporting to the Second Committee on agenda items relating to the Institute's research and training activities.

Financing

97. The Institute's activities are funded by voluntary contributions from States, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, foundations and private sources. Its financial operations are governed by the Financial Regulations and Rules of the United Nations, as well as by the financial policies and procedures established by the Secretary-General.

98. Since its establishment, INSTRAW has received pledges from 72 Member States, both developed and developing countries. Voluntary contributions received by the United Nations Trust Fund for INSTRAW for the biennium 1994-1995, including specific contributions for special projects and programmes, amounted to US$ 2,180,273. In the current biennium, this amount is expected to increase through additional contributions from donor countries that have pledged but have not yet paid their contributions. As at July 1997, it totalled $1,805,265. According to the data submitted by INSTRAW, no contributions were made to its budget from sources other than States over the past two bienniums. In keeping with the JIU recommendation concerning autonomous institutes of the United Nations, INSTRAW has attained a financial reserve of $1 million, which should enable it to meet any shortfall in expected pledges.

99. In 1994-1995, INSTRAW spent on research an amount of budget resources ($371,500) one and a half times the amount spent on training ($245,000). In 1996-1997, INSTRAW spent $209,500 on training, double the amount spent on research ($106,000).

100. INSTRAW is also responsible for providing administrative support to all its programmes. This includes financial management and budgetary controls, monitoring of financial commitments, recruitment and personnel administration, procurement and other activities. Despite the constraints springing from external circumstances and the insufficiency of qualified Professional staff, INSTRAW has successfully carried out the biennium programme and has a sound financial base.

Training and training-related activities

101. Since its inception, INSTRAW has made every effort to strengthen its research, training, information and advocacy role in key areas affecting the advancement of women, and to facilitate their empowerment and inclusion as equal partners in development. The Institute's training activities target three major audiences: (a) development practitioners at all levels, including planners and policy makers; (b) technical personnel, development planners, trainers, administrative and extension workers; and (c) women's organizations and non-governmental organizations involved with women, gender and development. These three audiences are selected first, on the basis of their potentially key motivation and catalytic roles in the promotion of gender issues in various development sectors, and secondly, bearing in mind the training-of-trainers approach, with the objective of transferring training techniques in a self-reliant manner to wider audiences.

102. In resolution 50/163, the General Assembly commended the efforts of the Institute to address all levels of poverty that hamper dramatically the advancement of women. With regard to the Institute's future work, the Board of Trustees, at its sixteenth session, recommended that INSTRAW should undertake steps to address the 12 critical areas of concern in the Beijing Platform for Action relevant to its research and training programme.

V. INTER-AGENCY COOPERATION AND COORDINATION MECHANISMS

A. General

103. Cooperation and coordination among the United Nations system training institutions have long been a concern of the legislative organs of the organizations and of the institutions themselves. For instance, the United Nations General Assembly, aware of the danger of duplication, stated in resolution 2951 (XXVII), that close coordination should be maintained between the activities of UNESCO, UNITAR and other organizations of the United Nations system and those of the University. Such coordination was ensured through regular consultations, exchange of information and overall mutual support among the organizations concerned. Numerous efforts were made to differentiate between the particular programmes of UNITAR and UNU and to establish clear arrangements to prevent any possible overlapping and duplication.

104. In several recent resolutions, the General Assembly has invited UNITAR to strengthen its cooperation with United Nations institutes and other national, regional and international institutes and develop collaborative links with organs and agencies within the organization and the United Nations system. In resolution 51/188, the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to submit to it at its fifty-second session a report on ways and modalities of cooperation, in order to better define the role of the Institute in the fields of training, research and methodology, assessment and capacity-building within the United Nations system.

105. Over the past few years, the Secretary-General and, upon instructions from the UNITAR Board of Trustees, the Executive Director of UNITAR, have actively

pursued avenues for increased inter-agency cooperation. For example, UNITAR and UNSCP have cooperated in various ways, including participation by UNITAR in UNSCP curriculum development workshops. Priority areas for this type of cooperation include peacekeeping and peacemaking; provision of humanitarian assistance and management of complex emergencies; and management of development activities.

106. In the Secretary-General's view, the training activities of both UNITAR and UNSCP would benefit from association, in terms of yielding mutual benefits in strengthening and rationalizing respective curriculum development in areas and disciplines of shared interest and activity. Such association, in his view, would also enhance the cost-effectiveness of programme development and delivery and have the added benefit of avoiding "donor fatigue". Moreover, joint training and learning opportunities for government representatives and United Nations system staff will contribute to building operational partnerships for more effective action in areas of shared concern.

107. Another instance of UNITAR's efforts to promote inter-agency cooperation is through "project task forces" established by UNITAR's training and capacity-building programmes. Through these task forces, UNITAR offers to the institutions and bodies concerned the possibility not only to participate in workshops and seminars but also to contribute to the drafting of the programmes and the selecting of priorities. In this way, the task forces facilitate cooperation at the same time as they help to avoid duplication.

108. During its March 1997 session, the UNITAR Board of Trustees recommended that the catalysing role of the Institute, its networking capacity and its ability to mobilize much larger institutions should be better explained to Member States and potential donors. The Board also requested the Executive Director to prepare a detailed overview of this matter with special reference to the network established by UNITAR with other United Nations organizations.

109. At its special session held at Geneva from 3 to 5 September 1997, the UNITAR Board of Trustees considered the document prepared at its request by the Executive Director. Under item 5, Inter-agency cooperation, the Board noted that the document had considerable informative value for UNITAR and its partners, in particular as an indication of the Institute's networking character. To strengthen networking further, the document would be widely circulated.

110. At the same session, the UNITAR Board of Trustees took note of a letter dated 1 August 1997 from the United Nations Secretary-General to the Executive Director of UNITAR, inviting him to become an ex officio member of the UNSC Board and noted the Secretary-General's statement that UNSC has been designed to provide learning and training opportunities to staff throughout the world and to associate, where possible, with partner organizations. Though UNITAR catered almost exclusively to the training needs of Member States, the Board considered that when and where possible, cooperation and exchanges between the two institutes could be mutually beneficial.

111. For its part, UNSCP, which was conceived as a worldwide network of training and teaching services, has "learning partnerships" with a number of institutions

in all parts of the world. Its implementation unit is acting as a network hub and works closely with prominent national and regional institutions to share relevant expertise, curriculum design and development, and exchange programmes and staff as well as training methods and materials.

112. INSTRAW is required by its Statute to carry out its activities in close collaboration and coordination with other bodies within and outside the United Nations system (A/39/511, annex, para. 3). Furthermore, INSTRAW shall make every effort to develop and utilize networking, as appropriate, in carrying out its functions (ibid., para. 2). In resolution 50/163, the General Assembly encouraged INSTRAW further to develop close cooperation with the specialized agencies and related organizations of the United Nations system and with other institutions, such as universities and research institutions, so as to promote programmes that contribute to the advancement of women.

113. In consultation with the Statistics Division of the United Nations Secretariat and the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), INSTRAW has produced a training package on gender statistics in development. Since 1986, INSTRAW has prepared all its training packages on environmental matters in cooperation with ITC/ILO. It has also cooperated with ITC/ILO to ensure that the gender dimension was fully integrated into the preparation of the latter's curricula. ITC/ILO has also provided a venue for INSTRAW training seminars. Both institutions jointly organized a subregional seminar for countries with economies in transition.

114. To develop further its cooperation with UNSCP, INSTRAW will employ its research and training expertise on gender issues in the preparation of United Nations International Drug Control Programme/UNSCP training materials. At its sixteenth session, the INSTRAW Board, concerned about the necessity to enhance cooperation with other institutes, requested that the Institute update its communication technologies in order to benefit from the Internet and electronic mail.

115. In his July 1997 report on reform, the United Nations Secretary-General emphasized that the capacities of the institutes represent an important potential resource. Yet, he also observed that one of the major characteristics of the research institutes was that they had little or no contact with one another and that, consequently, there was no mechanism to identify significant overlap in work programmes and, equally important, no opportunity to exploit complementarities and identify areas of potential conflict or inconsistency. In his view, it is necessary to devise ongoing mechanisms and procedures that would engender more systematic and regular contact between the research institutes and the United Nations Secretariat. He then announced that the Strategic Planning Unit in his Office would serve as the principal liaison with the research institutes, providing them with suggestions for research topics and constituting one of the primary consumers of relevant research topics.

116. During their examination of this subject, the Inspectors took note of the institutions' efforts to enhance inter-agency cooperation. The Inspectors nevertheless concluded that none of those efforts went far enough and that the inadequate interaction, or even total lack of coordination, among the training institutions was a major obstacle in their way. Yet it was obvious that their

closer coordination and interaction could lead to significant economies of scale throughout the system through the elimination of overlap, the more rational use of their human and financial resources and the utilization of the best technical expertise and most advanced methodologies and materials for any given training programme or activity. Furthermore, the Inspectors regretted the absence of adequate links between the training institutions and the governing bodies and substantive programmes of United Nations system organizations.

117. The following sections of the present report contain an overview of existing coordination mechanisms and the Inspectors' suggestions for the strengthening of coordination and cooperation throughout the United Nations system.

B. Consultative Committee on Administrative Questions Subcommittee on Staff Training

118. In 1974, CCAQ established its Subcommittee on Staff Training to (a) advise CCAQ on staff training matters; (b) function as coordination agency for regular exchange of information on future training programmes and past and present experiences; (c) develop a common terminology in staff training activities; and (d) act as inter-agency clearing house on staff training matters.[8] Over time, the Subcommittee has made efforts to enhance its responsiveness to CCAQ through the development of appropriate strategies and products such as (a) guidelines for the evaluation of training, (b) a generic framework for training in performance evaluation, (c) the delineation of basic principles for institutionalizing management development programmes and (d) a competency-based management development framework. In addition, the Subcommittee provided a unique forum for exchanging views, learning from others' experiences and promoting the sharing and harmonization of strategies and materials. Subcommittee sessions also provided an opportunity for training specialists to be kept abreast of new trends in their profession, especially through presentations by specialists from outside the United Nations system.[9]

119. Pursuant to the request of CCAQ at its eighty-third session, the Subcommittee reviewed its role and functioning. It recommended its revised terms of reference as follows: (a) to advise CCAQ on staff training policies and issues and, as appropriate, broader human resources development issues in response to emerging or anticipated trends; (b) to act as the inter-agency clearing house on staff training matters through the regular exchange of experience, information and training products; (c) to develop common approaches, strategies, standards and other training products wherever feasible and cost-effective; (d) to serve as a forum for the furtherance of knowledge on evolving theories and best practices in staff training and related issues for members from the organizations of the common system.[10]

120. With regard to its methods of work, the Subcommittee itself recognized that there were cost-effective technologies available which would facilitate more regular and sustained communication and allow it to keep its sessions to the minimum necessary; these included Internet and the use of videoconferencing. It proposed to employ such means whenever feasible and cost-effective. Nonetheless, meetings that allowed for face-to-face contacts were considered of

continuing importance. They could, however, be made more efficient through the exchange of more information in advance and the use of regional sub-groups to develop issues and products for the Subcommittee's consideration.[11]

121. At its seventeenth session, the Subcommittee adopted 10 principles for institutionalizing management development programmes within the organizations of the common system and recognized management development as a vital part of staff development. At its eighteenth session, the Subcommittee reaffirmed the need to move forward in this area through developing a prototype of a competency-based framework for management development in the organizations of the common system.[12] At its eighty-second session, CCAQ expressed appreciation for the work carried out in defining the elements of the competency framework. Following the exchange of views on current trends in management development and performance management, in particular the introduction of competencies in organizations' human resources programmes, the Subcommittee was expected to undertake further work on the management development framework under the joint leadership of FAO and the United Nations Office at Geneva for presentation to CCAQ.[13] The Inspectors hope that the Subcommittee will complete its important task of developing a common management development framework for competency-based performance management.[14]

122. In 1994, the Subcommittee carried out a survey of Geneva-based organizations which revealed that: (a) EDP training needed analysis, planning and organization; and (b) inter-agency cooperation was desirable in the areas of common courses, information exchange and training-facility sharing.[15] Organizations at other duty stations confirmed those findings and expressed their interest in inter-agency cooperation in those areas.

123. At its eighteenth session, the Subcommittee appointed a working group to develop an effective inter-agency information-sharing system that would foster collaboration among EDP trainers, EDP specialists and training officers across the system, as well as with other inter-agency bodies concerned with information technology and services.[16] The group recommended that an information network be established with other relevant inter-agency bodies to encourage greater cooperation in EDP training and to prepare for future training requirements. It also recommended further contacts with ICC, which regularly conducts surveys of software in use in all organizations, and the Information Systems Coordination Committee (ISCC), which provides strategic advice to ACC on information systems technology and services.[17]

C. Consultative Committee on Programme and Operational Questions Advisory Panel

124. In March 1990, the Consultative Committee on Substantive Questions (Operational Activities) (CCSQ/OPS), later CCPOQ, established the Advisory Panel on Operational Activities Training for the specific purpose of providing guidance on the content, format and approach of the programme of management of field coordination for senior United Nations system representatives. Initially, the Panel had a relatively limited membership, comprising a cross-section of representatives of large and small technical organizations. In 1992, CCSQ/OPS decided to maintain the Advisory Panel and to open its membership to all CCPOQ

members. This was followed in September 1994 by a full review of the role and functioning of the Panel and the adoption in February 1995 of revised terms of reference. The Advisory Panel meets at least once a year and as otherwise determined by the Chairperson of CCPOQ. Reports and recommendations of the Advisory Panel are submitted to CCPOQ for consideration and approval.

125. Under the terms of reference approved by CCPOQ at its fifth session,[18] the Advisory Panel will:

(a) Provide advice and guidance to CCPOQ on the effective and efficient development and conduct of common system-wide training programmes in support of operational activities for development within the United Nations system;

(b) Systematically review and provide advice and guidance to CCPOQ and to the Turin Centre on all aspects, substantive and operational, of (i) the programme on management of field coordination for senior United Nations system representatives; (ii) the training of trainers programme on management of development: national capacity strengthening; (iii) any other system-wide and common training in support of operational activities;

(c) Generate an exchange of information between member organizations on these programmes and other training programmes on operational activities. The Panel will seek to facilitate harmonized approaches between and within agencies on all aspects of this training.

The terms of reference also stipulate that the Advisory Panel may establish sub-groups as may be required for the conduct of its activities.

126. At its thirteenth session, in July 1997, the Advisory Panel felt that because of a number of recent developments in the field of operational activities training, a review of its role and functioning would be appropriate. The principal development relates to the launching of UNSCP in January 1996 and its subsequent formal opening by the Secretary-General on 12 April 1997.

127. It will be recalled that the terms of reference of the Panel were modified in 1992, so as to open its membership to all CCPOQ members as well as related inter-agency bodies. Representation was further encouraged by a mix of officials dealing with operational activities, staff training or human resources development, in order to ensure appropriate technical expertise. There have been undoubted advantages from these arrangements, notably in ensuring a comprehensive exchange of information and synergies with other training exercises.

128. Recent meetings of the Advisory Panel have nevertheless encountered some difficulties. A proposal was accordingly made to consider whether the Panel was functioning in an optimal manner. The main problem appears to arise from the need for all organizations to reduce travel and meeting costs. As Panel meetings generally last one or two days at the most, travel specifically for this purpose becomes hard to justify. The result is that Panel meetings have been systematically held in conjunction with other events attended by CCPOQ members.

129. It was also felt that the larger and more general participation at Panel meetings had also reduced the time and effort that could be devoted to the substantive analysis of issues such as the recent evaluation report on the management of development/national capacity strengthening programme. In some respects, Panel meetings now resemble a standard CCPOQ plenary session, thereby diffusing the advice and guidance given to ITC/ILO. It was suggested to consider whether a more limited participation based on rotational membership would enable a more flexible and targeted convening of meetings, including at locations other than Geneva and New York, such as Turin, and a more focused and specialized treatment of issues. The view was also expressed that the functions of the Advisory Panel might overlap with those of the CCAQ Subcommittee on Staff Training.[19]

D. Joint Consultative Group on Policy Sub-Group on Personnel and Training: Working Group on Training

130. The JCGP Sub-Group on Personnel and Training (a) reviews areas for policy development on personnel matters of special interest to field-oriented organizations; (b) proposes areas for joint or coordinated action by JCGP organizations; (c) ensures exchanges of information and experiences in areas of mutual concern; and (d) promotes exchange of staff among JCGP agencies. The Working Group on Training of the Sub-Group on Personnel and Training (a) shares information on current training policies, activities and plans of the JCGP agencies; (b) proposes areas for common training around personnel and programme themes of relevance to the JCGP agencies; (c) prepares materials to assist this process, such as, for example, orientation to the United Nations, training of trainers on HIV/AIDS in the workplace and training materials to support International Conference on Population and Development follow-up; and (d) promotes mechanisms to support better coordination of training activities in the field.

131. CCPOQ and JCGP - comprising UNICEF, UNDP, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), WFP and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), with the United Nations and UNHCR as observers - have become increasingly involved in staff training issues. Close collaboration has been developed between the CCAQ Subcommittee and JCGP, for example, through the sharing of information on training initiatives on HIV/AIDS in the workplace.

E. Annual meeting of the heads of United Nations institutes and divisions for training, research and planning

132. The annual meeting of the heads of United Nations institutes and divisions for training, research and planning was organized by UNITAR to foster coordination and cooperation among the various entities engaged in planning, training and research activities. Its objective was to provoke reflection and an exchange of ideas on specific problems and possible solutions. It brought together officials from within and outside the United Nations who were directly involved in the topics selected for discussion.

133. In 1995, the heads of United Nations institutes held their 26th meeting since 1965, which was also the last one. The main reason for discontinuing the meeting was financial: UNITAR had to pay to the United Nations Office at Geneva all costs involved, such as room and services.

F. Proposed coordinating consultative mechanism

134. In the Inspectors' view, training programmes and activities can best be strengthened through cooperation primarily among the main United Nations system training and research institutions: UNITAR, UNU and - once its present legal status is modified further from its present condition as a project - UNSC. To that end, the United Nations General Assembly and the legislative organs of the other JIU participating organizations should improve upon the present informal cooperation and coordination arrangements among training institutions through the establishment of a more structured mechanism. Specifically, the General Assembly and the other legislative organs should establish a coordinating consultative mechanism composed of UNITAR, UNU and UNSC acting jointly and duly networked. This mechanism would develop modalities for regular meetings to consider training and training-related research issues in the United Nations system. One of its main functions would be to elaborate, in consultation with other training institutions, the International Civil Service Commission and the Administrative Committee on Coordination machinery, a common conceptual training framework and strategy. Taking fully into account the UNU training research output referred to in recommendation 1 (c) above and in consultation with other training institutions as appropriate, the mechanism would also set forth objectives, establish priorities and develop policies, guidelines and standards for the consideration and approval of the governing bodies of the training institutions. A database to be developed by the ACC machinery would furnish a sound basis for the mechanism to establish training priorities.

135. In carrying out its tasks, the coordinating consultative mechanism should be guided by the following principles:

(a) Due respect for the interests of all participating organizations;

(b) Full exchange of information;

(c) Training programmes and activities must be considered as coherent cycles entailing the retraining of different target groups, in which each step of the cycle must have its own objectives;

(d) In contrast to the current practice, "one-off" training events should be the exception and not the rule;

(e) Training methodologies and didactic and audio-visual materials should be developed using modern tools, including the most advanced information and telecommunication systems, subject to the availability of resources;

(f) Training programmes must be regularly and systematically evaluated to quantify and qualify their impact, to identify the best prevailing practices, which should then be institutionalized, and to introduce other improvements;

(g) Training programmes should be evaluated mainly on the basis of self-assessments prepared by the organizations, institutions and specific programmes themselves;

(h) Beneficiaries and donors should participate in all self-evaluations and overall evaluations;

(i) Even though training needs and means may be disparate, training strategies, concepts, methodologies, policies, guidelines and standards should be common or, at least, complementary.

Notes

[1] Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-first Session, Supplement No. 14 (A/51/14), part II.

[2] Report on the nineteenth session of the Subcommittee on Staff Training (ACC/1996/PER/R.5), para. 22).

[3] Ibid., para. 19.

[4] Ibid., para. 23.

[5] Michael Armstrong and John Lorentzen, Handbook of Personal Management Practice, Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, Prentice Hall, 1992, p. 123.

[6] Agreement between the United Nations and the International Labour Organization regarding the use and occupation of the premises at the International Training Centre of ILO at Turin and the facilities and services.

[7] International Labour Office, Governing Body, "The Director-General's programme and budget proposals for 1998-1999" (GB.268/PFA/6/1), para. 75.3.

[8] See report on the nineteenth session of the Subcommittee on Staff Training (ACC/1996/PER/R.5), annex VI.

[9] Ibid., para. 45.

[10] Ibid., para. 47.

[11] Ibid., para. 48.

[12] Ibid., para. 6.

[13] Ibid., para. 12.

[14] Ibid., para. 3.

[15] Ibid., para. 14.

[16] Ibid., para. 13.

[17] Ibid., para. 16.

[18] See report of the Consultative Committee on Programme and Operational Questions on its fifth session (ACC/1995/1 and Corr.1), para. 17 and annex III.

[19] See report on the nineteenth session of the Subcommittee on Staff Training (ACC/1996/PER/R.5), para. 46.

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ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT: INTERNATIONAL DECADE FOR NATURAL DISASTER REDUCTION

International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction

Report of the Secretary-General

SUMMARY

In response to the request of the General Assembly in its resolution 51/185 of 16 December 1996, the present report contains information on the final phase of the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction (1998-1999). The report provides an overview of the status of implementation of Decade activities, an elaboration of the action plan for the period 1998-1999 as well as options for disaster reduction in the twenty-first century. The report addresses the issue of the preparatory phase for the final event of the Decade and also attempts to provide a forward-looking overview on the status of the synergies with other major strategic concerns of the United Nations system. A review of regional and global activities of the IDNDR is provided in the report, as well as a summary of activities of organizations of the United Nations system. Financial support from Governments and relevant United Nations organizations for the IDNDR secretariat's activities in the next two years was also identified as crucial to the success of the final phase of the Decade. The report concludes that Member States must agree on the form of the final event for the Decade and cites in this respect the proposal by the Scientific and Technical Committee of IDNDR to devote the high-level segment of the summer session of the Economic and Social Council in 1999 to the issue of disaster reduction and future institutional arrangements for the twenty-first century.

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. In 1997, the issue of disaster reduction continued to gain in importance and recognition. Numerous large-scale disasters have demonstrated the seriousness of the threat posed by natural hazards to vulnerable populations and the need for prevention and mitigation strategies. Disasters have occurred in industrialized and developing countries alike, with particularly harsh consequences for communities in least developed countries, land-locked countries and small island developing States. Disasters have a serious impact on the social and economic fabrics of countries and local communities. Disaster reduction is, therefore, recognized as an essential component of sustainable development strategies - one which protects human life and property as well as basic infrastructure and public services.

2. With barely two years remaining before the end of the Decade's programme, the secretariat for the Decade (IDNDR) depends on functional continuity, institutional visibility, policy recognition at the highest level and an active involvement of all in the International Framework of Action for the Decade (see Assembly resolution 44/236, annex). The Decade is now entering its process of evaluation of its overall achievements and developing of a comprehensive disaster reduction strategy for the twenty-first century.

3. This report is presented pursuant to Assembly resolution 51/185 of 16 December 1996, in which the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to present proposals regarding the format, substance and timing of the closing event for the Decade and a programme of work for the biennium.

II. STATUS OF IMPLEMENTATION

A. Strategic synergies

4. In resolution 51/185, the Assembly underlined the need for the United Nations system to ensure the integration of the Yokohama Strategy and the Plan of Action (A/CONF.172/9, chap. I, resolution 1, annex I) into the coordinated approach taken to the follow-up to all recent United Nations conferences and summit meetings and the implementation of their respective plans of action. Consequently, the IDNDR secretariat has succeeded in establishing synergies with several global mainstream strategies of the United Nations system in both social and economic fields, such as the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements, the World Food Summit, the Declaration on the Occasion of the Fiftieth Anniversary of the United Nations (Assembly resolution 50/6) and the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States. Concerning the latter, it should be noted that the IDNDR secretariat serves as Task Manager for the issue of natural and environmental disasters, and, together with the World Meteorological Organization (WMO), coordinated the preparation of the respective report of the Secretary-General (E/CN.17/1996/20/Add.1). The IDNDR secretariat is also cooperating closely with the Office of Outer Space Affairs in the preparation of the segment on disaster prevention warning and mitigation for the UNISPACE III Conference, to be held in Vienna 1999.

5. It should be noted that the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) considered IDNDR issues at its second regular session of 1997. ACC emphasized the importance of inter-agency collaboration in the follow-up to the World Conference on Natural Disaster Reduction and in the implementation of the Yokohama Strategy and Plan of Action. It called upon organizations of the United Nations system to contribute to the preparatory process for the closing event of the Decade and to give priority attention to the activities of the Decade beyond the year 2000.

6. The IDNDR secretariat actively participates in the Inter-Agency Committee on Sustainable Development with regard to the "Coordination of the geoscience programme of the United Nations system", as initiated by WMO in cooperation with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and other partners; it is also active in the ACC subcommittees on freshwater resources and on oceans and coastal areas, where it is responsible for producing a report on all achievements made and actions taken and to be taken by all agencies in the field of disaster prevention, in particular, the integration of the preventive aspect into land and water management.

B. Regional strategies

7. Within the implementation of IDNDR and, specifically, since the 1994 World Conference on Natural Disaster Reduction, geographical regions and subregions have continuously gained in importance as centres of reference for the generation and sharing of knowledge and know-how in disaster reduction. Regional frameworks are highly conducive to enlarged community-based vulnerability assessment and risk reduction. Consequently, such strategies form one of the cornerstones for a successful conclusion of the Decade and its projection into the twenty-first century. Examples of regional strategies are the following:

(a) Australia, New Zealand and the South Pacific island countries have adopted an IDNDR regional strategy for disaster reduction. The sixth South Pacific regional IDNDR disaster management meeting, held at Brisbane, Australia, from 9 to 12 September 1997, adopted a precise regional action plan for the Decade's consolidation phase as well as a strategic plan for the continuation of disaster reduction activities in the twenty-first century. The seventh South Pacific IDNDR meeting will be held in July 1998;

(b) With regard to the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and the newly independent States, a close collaborative relationship has been established between the IDNDR International Framework for Action and the Inter-State Council for Disaster Relief and Coordination of the CIS. The Council's last two meetings in Chisinau, Republic of Moldova, 20 to 21 May 1997, and Yerevan, Armenia, 23 to 24 September 1997, embarked on a concerted regional approach to disaster prevention, preparedness, mitigation and response within the Decade's concluding phase. The Moldova Declaration reaffirmed the commitment of the countries of the former Soviet Union to disaster reduction. The IDNDR secretariat is also actively participating in the Magdeburg Process on Cooperation of the Central, Eastern, and South-Eastern European Countries for the Protection against Natural and Other Disasters. The Government of Armenia

will host a regional IDNDR closing event in September 1998, in conjunction with the fifth Conference of the Magdeburg Process, on the occasion of the tenth anniversary of the Spitak earthquake;

(c) The high-level segment of the 1995 substantive session of the Economic and Social Council was devoted to the question of the development of Africa, including the implementation of the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa (see A/50/3, chap. II). The Council recognized the paramount interest of countries in Africa in effective natural disaster reduction, to be considered and achieved within the implementation of IDNDR itself, as well as within other major United Nations strategies in the region. The Organization of African Unity and the Economic Commission for Africa are active partners within the IDNDR framework;

(d) Countries of the Mediterranean basin agreed on guidelines for the development of a "Mediterranean strategy for disaster prevention and vulnerability reduction", as a result of an international workshop organized by the IDNDR secretariat and held in Rome from 26 to 28 September 1996, with the financial support of the Government of Italy and the organizational coordination of the Italian National Committee for IDNDR. Several other regional activities and meetings took place in 1996 and 1997 under the umbrella of the IDNDR, in particular, to explore cooperation and synergy in several specific fields, such as the use of satellite technology for disaster reduction, vulnerability assessment and risk management in urban areas, and water-related hazards;

(e) In Latin America and the Caribbean, successful regional cooperation has been established in particular with the Organization of American States, the Pan-American Health Organization (PAHO) and other regional constituencies, for a "hemispheric approach" to disaster reduction. In response to the call by the Hemispheric Congress on Disaster Reduction and Sustainable Development (Caracas, 1997), an inter-American dialogue for disaster reduction is being established, with support from international, regional, and national entities, both in the public and private sectors, to encourage the discussion of initiatives to meet the goals of the Decade. Several other processes have led to the progressive consolidation of a regional cooperation capacity in Latin America and the Caribbean, as well as to the organization of numerous international meetings also in the framework of the final phase of the Decade. A regional meeting is to take place in Panama in October 1997, under the auspices of the Association of Caribbean States, to discuss the guidelines for the elaboration of a regional common position on disaster reduction. Finally, in 1997, 20 countries from Latin America, together with Spain and Portugal, represented by their heads of State, created the "Ibero-American Association of Governmental Civil Protection Organisms" under the overall framework of IDNDR;

(f) Another regional achievement is the establishment of the Regional Documentation Centre for disaster reduction in Latin America and the Caribbean, whose main purpose is to facilitate the access to existing and future technical and scientific information about the prevention, mitigation and response to disasters to improve the preventive culture and response capacity of countries in Latin America and the Caribbean. Members of the Centre are the IDNDR secretariat, PAHO, the regional office of Médecins sans Frontières, Costa Rica's National Emergency Commission, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red

Crescent Societies, and the Central American National Disaster Prevention Center;

(g) The Government of the United States adopted a comprehensive disaster reduction strategy, elaborated by the Federal Emergency Management Agency, taking into account the global objectives of the Decade. Concerning the role of civil society in disaster reduction, further progress has to be noted on the building of cooperative links between the public and the private sector. In particular, a Public-Private Partnership initiative (PPP-2000) was launched in the United States in 1997. Along the same principles, the Canadian National Committee for IDNDR, together with the disaster reduction community in Canada, started a project on "Risk and Societies" with a view to identifying local community needs for an overall disaster reduction strategy;

(h) The Commission of the European Union and the Council of Europe have been actively engaged in disaster reduction. The initiatives launched in the past two years have covered both the vulnerability of European countries to natural disasters and the integration of natural disaster reduction into scientific, environmental, developmental and humanitarian cooperation programmes with third countries. The efficient work of the IDNDR national committees of France, Germany and the United Kingdom must be commended, especially in relation to the planning and organization of relevant central events of the final phase of the Decade, such as the conference on early warning systems with regard to natural and similar disasters scheduled to take place at Potsdam, Germany, in 1998;

(i) In Asia, several regional activities and meetings have taken place in the framework of the Decade. The greater attention being shown to disaster reduction in 1997 has been due in part to the uncontrollable fires that have plagued Indonesia. China, India, Nepal and many other countries have engaged in significant national and regional disaster reduction initiatives. Japan announced its intention to establish an Asian disaster reduction centre in the near future. From a more general point of view, the Asian Disaster Preparedness Centre in Bangkok has continued to advocate the principles of the Decade and, as a key partner in the region, has reconfirmed its full commitment to the implementation of the final phase of the Decade.

C. Global activities

1. World disaster reduction campaigns

8. World disaster reduction campaigns are organized each year by the IDNDR secretariat in order to promote worldwide awareness on specific issues and themes related to disaster reduction. The international media attention for the campaigns culminates on International Disaster Reduction Day, established in accordance with General Assembly resolution 44/236 and observed each year on the second Wednesday of October. The campaigns are conceived as ongoing activities throughout the year to spread awareness for disaster reduction to traditional and new target audiences.

9. The 1996 promotion campaign was built on the theme of "Cities at risk". It was chosen to complement important conferences in 1996, such as the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) and the Second International Conference on Local Authorities Confronting Disasters and Emergencies. The IDNDR secretariat produced guidelines on activities for the campaign in the shape of five leaflets (guidelines for organizers, poster contest, conferences, activities for children, facts and figures), which national committees and many other partner organizations and individuals used to observe the 1996 World Disaster Reduction Campaign. An innovative instrument for the Campaign was the establishment of an Internet (virtual) conference on "Cities at Risk". As one of the first conferences on the Internet in the United Nations system, the project brought together around 450 participants from 50 countries. The conference proved to be a successful substantive and networking exercise in disaster reduction awareness building.

10. In 1997, the International Day for Natural Disaster Reduction (8 October) was commemorated in a very large number of countries with events ranging from national awareness campaigns over several months to policy round tables and conferences bringing together water specialists and disaster mitigation experts. As a major specific activity, the IDNDR secretariat organized, in collaboration with a wide range of partners, its second Internet (virtual) conference on "Floods, drought: issues for the twenty-first century". Building on the success of the first IDNDR Internet conference in 1996, the 1997 Internet conference on water-related disasters attracted 700 participants from around 60 countries in order to discuss issues related to floods and drought. The 1997 World Disaster Reduction Campaign theme is "Water: too much ... too little ... leading cause of natural disasters".

11. The theme for the 1998 Campaign, which will culminate with the observance of the International Day for Natural Disaster Reduction (14 October), is "Disaster prevention and the media". The intention is to enlist the participation of the media at the international, regional and local levels in the dissemination of messages on the need for a "culture of prevention".

2. Other activities

12. With the support of the Government of Japan, the IDNDR secretariat is conducting the project "Risk assessment tools for diagnosis of urban areas against seismic disasters" (RADIUS), which aims at promoting worldwide activities for the reduction of earthquake disasters in urban areas, particularly in developing countries and is designed to develop practical tools for seismic risk assessment in urban areas, based on the analysis of case studies. The IDNDR secretariat will offer financial and technical assistance for the elaboration of such case studies. The project is based on the active involvement of cities and communities in the exchange of knowledge and expertise. The development of such "robust city systems" was one recommendation of the Habitat II Conference. The IDNDR secretariat is finalizing the selection of 10 case study cities in developing countries where earthquake damage scenarios will be developed. Other cities in developed countries that have already carried out a seismic risk assessment or will be in the process of doing so will be associated to the project. The associate cities will obtain useful

information from other cities and compare their respective degree of preparedness while contributing their own know-how, through the network of RADIUS.

13. The IDNDR secretariat successfully completed its current work programme for early warning, with regard to natural disasters, in response to Assembly resolution 50/117 B. Six international expert groups were convened to examine scientific knowledge and public practices that could contribute to more accurate and timely short-term forecasting and warning applications for natural and similar disasters. The resulting reports will be issued as IDNDR information papers, and their conclusions are summarized in the Secretary-General's report on improved effectiveness of early warning systems (A/52/561).

14. The IDNDR secretariat has developed a global and comprehensive project proposal "Disaster reduction for sustainable development", which aims at reducing the risk from natural disasters by providing advice on and support for the integration of disaster reduction into sustainable development strategies and development planning. The project is designed so as to be adaptable to any regional, subregional, national or local-level risk scenario. It builds on pilot activities for lessons learned and risk reduction in selected areas. So far, sub-proposals have been developed for activities in Albania, the Baltic States, countries in Central Europe affected by recent river floods, and in selected small island developing States (with particular emphasis on local capacity-building). The IDNDR secretariat is actively involved in activities towards reducing the vulnerability of small island States to natural disasters.

15. During the reporting period, the IDNDR secretariat has placed great emphasis on developing public/private partnerships for disaster reduction and preventive risk management. The private sector has engaged, in cooperation with the IDNDR secretariat, in a variety of activities reaching from the Leadership Coalition for Global Business Protection, initiated by IBM, to individual partnerships, i.e. with service and hardware providers in the space industry. In October 1997, IDNDR sponsored the International Disaster and Emergency Response Exhibition and Conference (IDER'97) in The Hague, the Netherlands, which was organized by Andrich International Ltd. The Conference highlighted the need for active partnership between the public and private sectors in developing comprehensive strategies for disaster prevention, preparedness and mitigation.

16. Non-governmental organizations will play an increasingly important role in the continuation of disaster reduction activities in the twenty-first century. Within the context of national IDNDR committees or similar approaches, NGOs have particular strengths in the fields of local community participation, the formulation of social development interests and integrated approaches towards disaster reduction. The IDNDR secretariat recently participated in the annual meeting of the Global Forum of NGOs for Disaster Reduction, held in Phoenix, Arizona, United States, in September 1997. The Global Forum has been established as a specific NGO follow-up to the World Conference on Natural Disaster Reduction.

17. In continuation of its primary motivation for the Decade, the scientific and technical community has remained active in promoting practical applications

of scientific knowledge and the dissemination of experience by means of their numerous professional organizations. The International Council of Scientific Unions (ICSU) and the World Federation of Engineering Unions continue to actively participate in IDNDR activities. ICSU is currently pursuing opportunities through its IDNDR Subcommittee with interested unions to ensure a continued professional focus on disaster reduction into the next century. The International Association of Seismology and Physics and the Earth's Interior (IASPEI) and the International Association of Volcanology and Chemistry of the Earth's Interior (IAVCEI) are jointly sponsoring a major conference to be held in 1998 in Santiago, Chile on modern preparation and response systems for earthquake, tsunami and volcanic hazards, an international meeting of governmental, academic and private institutions that will serve a major function in consolidating the lessons learned and applied in geophysics during the course of the Decade.

18. In order to strengthen concerted action for natural disaster reduction, the IDNDR secretariat, UNESCO, the Natural Hazard Mitigation Group (CERG) and the University of Geneva, Switzerland, have initiated the project "Development of institutional networks for disaster reduction". The purpose of the Web site project is to promote exchange of information, collaboration, and establishment of mechanisms for supporting the appropriate research, training, and application of disaster reduction at local levels. The intention is to provide the Internet community with an inventory of organizations active in the field of disaster preparedness, prevention and mitigation and to promote exchange of information, collaboration, and the establishment of mechanisms for supporting the appropriate research, training and application of disaster reduction at the local and regional levels.

III. FINAL PHASE OF THE DECADE

19. In its resolution 51/185, the Assembly recognized the paramount importance of a well-structured and coherent process towards the conclusion of the Decade, and requested proposals concerning the shape and form of natural disaster reduction activities in the twenty-first century and regarding the format, substance and timing of a closing event for the Decade with a view to enabling a forceful launching of the preparatory process as early as possible in 1998. In reference to these requests, the following paragraphs provide an overview of the proposed IDNDR action plan until the end of 1999, which was endorsed by the Scientific and Technical Committee for IDNDR at its ninth session, held in Geneva from 13 to 17 October 1997. As requested by the Assembly, future institutional options for disaster reduction activities after the end of the Decade are also presented below.

A. Action plan 1998-1999

20. The proposed IDNDR action plan 1998-1999 is a strategic framework for the implementation of the concluding phase of the Decade. It focuses on the implementation of crucial activities that exemplify the Decade's objective to reduce through concerted international action, especially in developing countries, the loss of life, property damage, and social and economic disruption

caused by natural and similar disasters that have an adverse impact upon the environment.

21. The plan is based upon the original aims of the Decade, as further elaborated at the World Conference on Natural Disaster Reduction, including the importance of human well-being in disaster reduction, the economic rationale for policy motivation to protect social resources and economic assets, and the essential value of community participation. Additional international initiatives related to hazard awareness and risk management practices for disaster reduction, such as forms of public-private partnership collaboration, have also influenced the preparation of the action plan.

22. The first objective of the plan is the consolidation of the Decade's achievements. In this respect, the original programming targets are considered the basis for assessing the achievements of the Decade. According to these targets, by the year 2000 all countries should have in place, as part of their national plans to achieve sustainable development, (a) comprehensive national assessments of risks from natural hazards integrated into development plans, (b) mitigation plans of practical measures for application at national and local levels to address long-term disaster prevention, preparedness and community awareness, and (c) ready access to global, regional, national and local warning systems.

23. The second objective of the action plan is to provide a platform for the future and to permit a wide ranging discussion on options for functional responsibilities and institutional mechanisms for continued disaster reduction activities in the twenty-first century.

24. The action plan is organized along the following primary themes for action:

(a) Hazard, vulnerability and risk assessment, including the translation of scientific knowledge of hazards to practical understanding and use, as well as a multi-disciplinary assessment of vulnerability;

(b) Disaster prevention and sustainable development in relation to the human habitat and productive environment, economic aspects, social aspects, environmental and land use aspects, and local practices dedicated to realizing global commitments towards economic growth, sustainable development, environmental protection and social and gender equity;

(c) Early warning issues, including greater international coordination and operational coherence, improved effectiveness of early warning and related response capabilities, local access and utilization capacities, and effective, assured and accessible telecommunications;

(d) Political and public policy commitment, including advocacy, information dissemination and partnership activities, statutory and legislative bases, evidence of the acceptance of reduction practices, international donor encouragement for protection and reduction, commitment of national policy and decision makers, engagement of municipal authorities and implementing agencies, as well as local and community measures for disaster reduction;

(e) Shared knowledge and technology transfer, including the application of research, the practical demonstrations of experience, the utilization of bottom-up implementation practices, the application of indigenous knowledge, organized information and communication, as well as developed organizational networks, and partnership collaboration.

25. The action plan will be implemented at three different levels:

(a) At the national level, selected activities will be undertaken by national committees for the Decade and relevant national authorities with local involvement, including public information and education programmes. The aim is to document accomplishments during the Decade through country reports, to publicize lessons learned and benefits of disaster reduction, to identify gaps in activities and to propose recommendations for future action;

(b) At the regional level, activities will focus on shared knowledge and the transfer of technologies for disaster reduction among countries of the same region and between regions themselves, based on the potential for synergy, cooperation and burden sharing;

(c) At the international level, the first purpose is to document global accomplishments in disaster reduction since 1990. In this respect, the action plan calls for the establishment of a comprehensive IDNDR secretariat Web site of sources, institutions and sites for disaster reduction information on the Internet.

26. The action plan also forecasts the production of an independent assessment by the Scientific and Technical Committee of the Decade's achievements in the form of a final report of the Committee to the Secretary-General in 1999.

27. One important aspect of the action plan relates to the anticipation of the kind of disasters likely to prevail in the twenty-first century. With the development of the global economy and its inexorable demands on both the human and the natural environment, new and more complicated hazards must be anticipated. They will combine the forces of nature with the ill-considered, or uncontrolled, behaviour of humankind, which can easily increase the vulnerability of communities and threaten the assets on which they must depend. The recent and long-term transboundary, social, economic and public health consequences of the fires in south-east Asia are a case in point. The widespread extent and severity of floods, as experienced this year in North America, Asia and Latin America, or the drought conditions anticipated in association with the recurrent El Niño phenomenon in parts of Africa, Australia and Asia cannot be separated from extensive economic and social ramifications affecting millions of people. The informed assessment of these contemporary hazards, effective risk management, and the prevention of future disasters must begin at the present time and be fully incorporated into the ongoing commitments of economic growth and developmental planning - at the international, regional, and national levels of responsibility.

28. The full text of the action plan is available from the secretariat of the IDNDR in the Department for Humanitarian Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat. The plan also contains an overview of a series of events that are

under way or that have been committed to in relation to the primary themes or regional assessments.

B. Recommendations from Decade Framework partners

29. National committees for the Decade remain an indispensable component for its successful implementation. Through their multisectoral and interdisciplinary function they provide key inputs into regional strategy building and, consequently, into the overall evaluation of the Decade's achievements. Many national committees have already embarked on developing their own positions and initiatives as to how disaster reduction could be projected in the twenty-first century; some committees have formulated comprehensive action plans for the remaining period of the Decade. The IDNDR secretariat is committed to strengthening its communication with national IDNDR committees in order to fully support their efforts and activities.

30. The informal core and contact groups of Permanent Missions in Geneva have continued to provide an excellent forum for consultations with Member States on all matters concerning the Decade. Two formal meetings were held in Geneva, in February and March 1997, with the participation of the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs. The informal contact group met in Geneva, in June 1997, and provided the initial forum for consultations on the Decade's closing event, the preparatory process and the envisaged priority activities within IDNDR for the remaining two years. The discussions within the informal core and contact groups were complemented by a number of bilateral discussions both in Geneva and in Member State capitals.

31. The Inter-Agency Steering Committee is the central forum for discussion of disaster reduction policies, strategic applications and programmes of action among the United Nations partners within the International Framework of Action. Its Working Group met in Geneva in May 1997. The discussions enabled the IDNDR secretariat to make swift progress in developing its action plan for 1998 and 1999 and to define major parameters for the concluding phase, including the closing event, the preparatory process and the projection of disaster reduction into the twenty-first century.

32. The main views as expressed in the Working Group meeting and in the follow-up contributions are summarized as follows:

(a) The agencies of the United Nations system identified certain areas that require further emphasis within the Framework of the Decade. The agencies stated that some national committees needed to be revitalized so that they could play a more active role in the implementation of the Decade's programmes, and greater efforts were needed towards the integration of disaster prevention into national development programmes;

(b) Several of the recommendations addressed the fact that, with the probable increase in the impact of natural disasters in the next century, more powerful technologies must be used to improve the efficiency of early warning systems and other facilities for disaster reduction. The international community also needs to standardize the multiple systems for early warning in

the case of natural and man-made disasters. The creation of a Web site for the IDNDR, which would display all the documentation and data collected during the decade for future reference and use, was also mentioned;

(c) The agencies also commented on possible future institutional arrangements for the creation of a disaster reduction mechanism after the conclusion of the Decade. They stressed the importance of a central international point of reference for all the actors involved in the implementation of their respective specific mandates. In the same spirit, and with regard to the final phase of the Decade, the agencies supported the organization of several regional and subregional events and the consolidation of the results from these events in the closing event of the Decade in 1999.

33. During the reporting period, the Scientific and Technical Committee for IDNDR held its eighth session in Paris, from 20 to 23 January 1997, and its ninth session in Geneva, from 13 to 17 October 1997. A separate report of those sessions is being produced for distribution to Member States. At both sessions, the Committee concentrated on the action plan for 1998-1999, on the closing event for the Decade and on the future of disaster reduction activities in the twenty-first century. The El Niño phenomenon was discussed at the ninth session. The Committee expressed the view that the IDNDR Framework should be involved, possibly in an increased fashion, in this important and potentially very serious natural hazard. At the conclusion of its ninth session, the Committee adopted a Declaration, which is reproduced as an annex to this report.

C. Preparatory process and closing event

34. In 1999, the United Nations Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction will come to an end. However, the function of disaster reduction will not cease. On the contrary, it will need further strengthening to become an important element of government policy and development planning. It is, therefore, important to conceive the closing event of the Decade not just as a review of disaster reduction activities in the 1990s but as a platform for the future so that it can project the ideas and fundamental concepts of disaster reduction into the twenty-first century. Furthermore, the concluding event of the Decade must demonstrate visibly and forcefully a shift from the simple awareness of unmitigated risk to a more focused assessment of risk management strategies.

35. For the reasons mentioned above, the Scientific and Technical Committee has recommended that the closing event of the Decade should include an important political component. This is best addressed, in the view of the Committee, by devoting the high-level segment of the substantive session of the Economic and Social Council in 1999 to disaster reduction and risk management. Alternatively, a special meeting of the General Assembly might be envisaged. Political consideration of the Decade by the Council could be complemented by the organization of a programme forum that would involve all the IDNDR Framework partners, which would include the Scientific and Technical Committee, national committees and other national constituencies, scientific and academic institutions, NGOs, regional entities and other relevant partners, as well as representation from the United Nations system at large.

36. The programme forum would, in concurrence with the discussion of the Council or the special meeting of the Assembly, provide the arena for a substantive review of disaster reduction achievements during the Decade, including their evaluation against the original targets. Such an evaluative and retrospective component of the Decade's conclusion could be structured in different ways, either by disciplines or sectors, or by thematic goals or strategic objectives. Additionally, comprehensive regional evaluations could be envisaged. Building on this evaluation of achievements, forward-looking proposals would be developed concerning the function of disaster reduction after the end of the Decade, including new goals and objectives and, possibly, a new programme of action, and new institutional arrangements.

37. Within the framework of the programme forum, due recognition would be given to scientific and technical progress in disaster reduction under the IDNDR umbrella. To this end and to elicit the views of the scientific community on the future scientific aspects of disaster reduction, the programme forum could contain a segment gathering participants from the relevant institutions and United Nations agencies. WMO might assume the role of coordinator of such a segment.

38. The establishment of a steering committee for the closing event is now under consideration. The steering committee would be set up jointly by the Chairman of the Scientific and Technical Committee and the Director of the IDNDR secretariat, in close consultation with all interested parties. It would be responsible for ensuring coherence in approach between the Council/Assembly component of the closing event and the programme forum. As already indicated in Assembly resolution 51/185, the IDNDR secretariat is the entity responsible for the preparatory process leading to the final events and for the organization of the latter.

39. Funding for the preparatory phase and for the closing event must be urgently sought. The preparatory phase will require staff and other expenditures, which are not available at the present time in the IDNDR secretariat.

IV. OPTIONS FOR FUTURE ARRANGEMENTS

40. The main institutional options for disaster reduction arrangements in the twenty-first century have to be based on an analysis of future disaster reduction functions.

A. Functional analysis of disaster reduction activities

41. Disaster reduction represents a key function for sustainable development, ensuring "safe development in a globalizing world", eradicating poverty, and strengthening civic society. Effective analysis of hazards, assessments of risk, and the reduction of vulnerability to disasters are key issues within efforts towards economic prosperity and social stability. These activities contribute to the protection of human lives, property and economic assets at the

local, national, regional and international levels. They also contribute to sound management of the environment and the protection of natural resources.

42. Within the United Nations system, disaster reduction, which is based on scientific knowledge and the availability of technology, is being recognized as forming an integral part of sustainable development strategies; it is also considered as an important component in the evolution of disaster management doctrines and applications. It forms a distinct link between the preventive and response elements of disaster management.

43. Disaster reduction therefore represents a cross-cutting issue within the coordinated approach towards the implementation of the results of all major recent United Nations summits and conferences in the social and economic fields. It is an important component with regard to raising the effectiveness of both development cooperation and the coordination of humanitarian assistance.

44. The main illustrative activities of disaster reduction strategies are (a) advocacy and awareness-raising of the need and the potential for disaster reduction, (b) promotion of hazard-related research and the dissemination of existing scientific resources and technology, (c) building effective partnerships among disaster-prone countries at the subregional, regional and international levels, (d) the integration of disaster reduction into national development planning, (e) strengthening the capacities of local communities to reduce, prepare for, and respond to disasters of any type, and (f) the participatory involvement of the private sector in order to ensure social and economic stability as well as business/market continuity through effective risk management.

B. Institutional options for the future

45. In line with the above functional analysis, and as requested by Assembly resolution 51/185, the following institutional options for future disaster reduction arrangements are presented:

(a) Advocacy and promotion of disaster reduction within the coordinated efforts of the international community towards achieving sustainable development, by means of the Commission on Sustainable Development and with the support of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat, the United Nations resident coordinator system, and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (with regard to disaster reduction as part of macroeconomic policies in support of enhanced competitiveness of disaster-prone developing countries);

(b) Integration of disaster reduction into national development planning and programming as part of the United Nations coordinated approach towards technical cooperation and development at the country level. In this context the main responsibility lies with the United Nations Development Programme and its resident representatives, including the coordination mechanisms of the Joint Consultative Group on Policy and the country strategy note;

(c) Application of disaster reduction within the framework of international scientific cooperation and transfer of technology, to be executed under the auspices of and in close organizational association with a specialized agency, such as WMO or UNESCO;

(d) Definition of disaster reduction as a component of public/private sector partnerships at the local, national, subregional, regional and international levels. This would include support for sustained economic growth and sustainable development, support for the eradication of poverty, and for social stability and well-being. Responsibilities would, in this case, lie predominantly with the private sector itself and local administration;

(e) Continuation and strengthening of disaster reduction as an element of disaster management under the coordinating responsibility of the United Nations and its focal authority for disasters (Office of the Emergency Relief Coordinator), with application responsibilities allocated to specialized agencies and organizations of the United Nations system, as well as the NGO community active in this field;

(f) Emphasis on the multisectoral dimension of disaster reduction and the need for coordination of United Nations system initiatives under an ACC subcommittee type of arrangement. This would require strong inter-agency support and commitment.

V. CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS

46. The impact of natural disasters is on the rise. As the twenty-first century approaches, rapid urbanization, environmental degradation and increased industrial activities, in particular when concentrated in hazard-prone areas, make the risk of major disasters even higher. It is estimated that the number of major natural disasters in the past 10 years was four times as high as in the 1960s. The number of people affected by disasters has been growing by 6 per cent on average per year since 1960. Almost 3 million have perished in natural disasters in the past three decades, while tens of millions have been affected by them. The Munich Reinsurance Company estimates total economic losses from natural disasters to have reached US$ 240 billion for the biennium 1995-1996.

47. These statistics emphatically call for a vigorous global action against disasters. Society can no longer be satisfied with waiting for disasters to occur and then only engage in relief activities. Disaster reduction must become an essential element of sustainable development policies and economic planning. The escalating cost of responding to disasters and compensating victims for losses incurred is becoming too high for Governments and local authorities to handle. The only affordable solution is to invest in prevention and mitigation activities. The present tendency of relying exclusively on a response-oriented approach to disasters needs to be replaced by strategic planning in prevention. If it is illusory to believe that hazards can be stopped, the avoidance or mitigation of disasters is an attainable goal.

48. Today, society faces unprecedented risks that have been amplified by technological progress. To ensure the successful prevention of disasters, better knowledge and understanding of natural phenomena and their impact is required, reinforcing the importance of the interaction between science and the society. The role of the programmes of the Decade as a bridge between these two worlds is vital, and it is in this context that the goals and objectives of the Decade have become even more relevant.

49. It is imperative that all Governments accord to disaster reduction the importance it deserves. Support to the IDNDR secretariat's action programme for 1998-1999 is essential to ensure that a culture of prevention prevails, thereby reducing the loss of life and human suffering resulting from disasters.

ANNEX

Declaration of the Scientific and Technical Committee of the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction, 17 October 1997

(i) The Scientific and Technical Committee of the IDNDR reaffirmed at its ninth session, held in Geneva from 13 to 17 October 1997, the need for Governments all around the world to integrate disaster reduction and risk management as an essential element of their development planning and sustainable development policies.

(ii) The growing vulnerability of populations to natural threats and the increasingly heavy toll of disasters on human beings and their property require urgent attention from all. At least 3 million people have lost their lives in disasters during the last 30 years, with 6.5 million people affected by natural disasters and recorded economic losses amounting to more than US$ 240 billion in 1995-1996 alone.

(iii) Humanity cannot afford to wait for disasters to come and only then take action through response and rehabilitation. This is becoming a severe burden for most societies and their Governments, both in financial and social terms. Prevention and preparedness strategies, based on scientific and technological applications as well as on social equity, and including the full involvement of civil society, must be put in place to protect national assets and property and especially to reduce human suffering, the loss of life, and the disruption of livelihoods.

(iv) The Scientific and Technical Committee strongly believes that the issue of disaster reduction must be taken up at the highest level of international and intergovernmental deliberations and urges all Governments to consider discussion of such issues at the high-level segment of the Economic and Social Council, in Geneva in 1999 or, alternatively, at a special meeting of the General Assembly during that year. It is of paramount importance to ensure that there is a concerted and coordinated international approach to risk reduction strategies in the twenty-first century. There will otherwise be no international foundation for risk reduction strategies at the closing of the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction (1990-2000). A new approach to disaster reduction, on the basis of an evaluation of the Decade's achievements, must be collectively agreed to by the international community.

(v) The Committee stresses that, in addition to selecting the appropriate high-level forum for 1999, Governments should seriously consider providing the necessary support for the IDNDR action plan 1998-1999 and for a programme forum in Geneva centred around the main themes for disaster reduction strategies for the end of the Decade. It also urgently requests all relevant organizations of the United Nations system to provide specific human and financial support to the IDNDR and to its action plan so that the stated goals and objectives of the Decade can be effectively met.